CALVIN'S COMMENTARIES

COMMENTARY ON JEREMIAH

VOLUME 1

Chapters 1–19



JOHN CALVIN

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Commentary on Jeremiah

Volume 1: Chapters 1–19

John Calvin

Translated from the original Latin and edited by the Rev. John Owen

Monergism Books

Commentary on Jeremiah
Volume 1: Chapters 1–19

John Calvin

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Published by Monergism Books
www.monergism.com

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Translator's Preface

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

The Commentaries On Jeremiah, like those on The Minor Prophets, were delivered as Lectures In The Theological School At Geneva, taken down by some of the Pupils, and afterwards read to Calvin, and corrected. We find in them the production of the same vigorous and expansive mind: The Divine Oracles are faithfully explained, the meaning is clearly stated, and such brief deductions are made as the subjects legitimately warrant. Though the Lectures were extemporaneously delivered, there is yet so much order preserved, and such brevity, clearness, and suitableness of diction are found in them, that in these respects they nearly equal the most finished compositions of Calvin as proof that he possessed a mind of no common order.

The Ministry Of Jeremiah extended over a large space of time from the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign till after the final overthrow of the nation; but for how long after that period, it is not known. [1] Between the thirteenth year of Josiah and the destruction of the city and Temple, there were about *forty* years. This was a remarkable period, and Jeremiah nearly alone labored among the people. Their sins had been for the most part the same for a long time — for nearly two centuries, as it appears from the testimonies of his predecessors, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Joel, Micah, Nahum, and Zephaniah; for these *seven* had in this order preceded him. Zephaniah And Habakkuk were probably for a time his contemporaries, the first at the commencement, and the other near the end of his ministry. The contumacy with which Jeremiah often charged the Jews was here evident, as they continued in their evil

[1] According to an ancient tradition, mentioned by Jerome and others, Jeremiah was stoned to death by the Jews at Tahpanhes in Egypt, (see Jeremiah 43:8) shortly after their removal there, subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem. So that he did not live long after that event: it may be two or three years.

courses after so many urgent remonstrances by the former Prophets.

What an example of blindness and of the power of superstition does the history of the Jews at this period exhibit! No past nor present calamities, and no threatenings of still greater calamities, and no promises of Divine favor and of temporal blessings, were sufficient to keep them from idolatrous and immoral practices — and such practices, too, as were plainly and explicitly condemned by that very Law which they professed to receive! Such inconsistency might have been deemed impossible, had it not been exemplified in the Jews: but it is an inconsistency which is still exhibited in the conduct of many calling themselves Christians.

As to The Style Of Jeremiah, the opinion of the accurate and elegant *Lowth* is as follows:

"Jeremiah, though not wanting either in elegance or sublimity, is yet in both inferior to Isaiah. Jerome seems to charge him with some measure of rusticity as to his expressions; but of this, I truly confess, I have found no traces. In thoughts, indeed, he is somewhat less elevated, being for the most part more loose and diffuse in his sentences, as one more conversant with the more tender feelings, being especially capable of expressing sorrow and sympathy. This, indeed, appears mainly in The Lamentations, where these feelings alone predominate; but it is also often found in his Prophecies, and particularly in the first part of his Book, which is chiefly poetical. The middle part is nearly all historical; and the last, consisting of six chapters, is altogether poetical, and contains several oracles plainly expressed, in which the Prophet nearly approaches the sublimity of Isaiah. But of the whole Book of Jeremiah, hardly the half do I consider to be poetical." — *Proel,* 21.

Venema mainly agrees with *Lowth:* he blames *Jerome* for ascribing rusticity of diction to our Prophet, and says that he was no good judge (*peritus Judex*) of such matters. Speaking of Jeremiah's style, he says, "His diction is not so lofty and sublime as that of Isaiah, though in the six last chapters, 46-51., it seems to me to be nearly equal to it, being no less pure, expressive, and copious, besprinkled also with tropes and metaphors as with lights, and fitted to move the feelings and to stimulate the heart to repentance, for which it was designed. The Lamentations alone are sufficient to defend Jeremiah against the charge of ignorance and rusticity; for antiquity, as *Sanctums* rightly observes, has nothing more grave, more harmonious, more expressive." *Com. ad Jer.*, p. 8.

"He is admirably pathetic," says *Scott; "*his descriptions of approaching judgments are peculiarly vivid; and his eloquence is very vigorous and impressive, when inveighing against the shameless audacity of the people in rebellion against God."

Of Jeremiah as a Prophet, *Henry* mentions these particulars: 1. That he was made a Prophet when young;-2. That he continued long a Prophet;-3. That he was a reproving Prophet;-4. That he was a weeping Prophet; — and, 5. That he was a suffering Prophet, having been persecuted by his own

nation more than any other.

There are several references in the New Testament to Jeremiah and to his writings. See Matthew 2:17, 18; Matthew 16:14; Hebrews 8:8-13; Hebrews 10:15-17. "These last references, "observes *Scott, "are* peculiarly important; for in one of them God himself is mentioned as speaking the words referred to; and in the other it is said, 'Whereof the Holy Ghost is a witness to us.' This is decisive, as to the judgment of the inspired Apostles, respecting the Book on which we now enter, and is peculiarly suited to put us on our guard against those professed friends of the Scriptures, who speak of these books as venerable, authentic, or genuine remains of antiquity, of great value and high authority, but hesitate to vindicate them as divinely inspired." *Pref. to Jer.*

Nothing is with any certainty known as having been written by Jeremiah, except this Book and the Lamentations. Ascribed to him has been a funeral song on the death of Josiah, (2 Chronicles 35:25) which, *Josephus* says, was extant in his day. It has been also said by some that he wrote the 137th Psalm (Psalm 137), and in connection with Ezekiel, the 46th Psalm (Psalm 46). His Letter to the captives in Babylon in the Apocrypha, appended to the book of Barite, is no doubt spurious: its style is very different from that of Jeremiah.

It is universally admitted that the Chapters in this Book are not in their right order. How this has happened, none have been able to conjecture; but the fact is evident. According to *Blayney,* whose account seems correct, the twelve first chapters contain prophecies delivered in the reign of Josiah. Those in the thirteenth, and in the following chapters to the twentieth inclusively, were delivered in the reign of Jehoiakim. Now begins the disorder; the twenty — first contains what was spoken in the time of Zedekiah, the last king: and afterwards we have what was delivered in a former reign. The kings of Judah, during Jeremiah's ministry, were these: Josiah; Shallum or Jehoahaz, his second son; Jehoiakim, his eldest son; Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim; and Zedekiah, the youngest son of Josiah. *Blayney* thinks that no prophecies were delivered in the reigns of Shallum and of Jeconiah. Then his classification may be stated as follows:-During the reign of

Josiah, were delivered, chapters 1-12, inclusively.

Shallum, none.

Jehoiakim, chapters 13-20, inclusively, 22, 23, 25, 26, 35, 36, 45, 46, 47, 48, and 49 to verse 33 inclusively.

Jeconiah, none.

Zedekiah, chapters 21, 24, 27 -34, 37-39, 49: from verse 34 to the end, 1, and 51.

The 40-44, inclusively, were written after the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the people; and the 52, the last, during the same time, or as it is commonly supposed, by Ezra; it is an epitome of the progressive and final overthrow of the kingdom.

There were several circumstances worthy of notice, with regard to The Jews, during the ministry of Jeremiah:

1. The *means* which God employed to lead them to repentance, and to a reformation of their conduct, both as to religion and morals: he gave them a pious and a reforming king in Josiah; the Book of the Law was providentially discovered and widely made known; a reformation was carried on according to its requirements, while idolatrous practices were in a great measure put an end to; the people had also before their eyes the awful judgment of God on their brethren, The Israelites, in banishing them from their country; and the powerful preaching of Jeremiah sounded in their ears.

2. The manifest *evidences* of God's displeasure: their good king, Josiah, was suddenly taken from them, no doubt as a judgment for their ingratitude; his successor, Suallum, was, after three months' reign, taken prisoner by the Egyptians, and the country was put under tribute; the country was visited with grievous famine, as recorded in chap. 14.; and Jeremiah, by God's command, denounced on them the punishment of an entire extinction as a nation.

3. The extremely *corrupted state* of the people: they were both most idolatrous and most immoral, unfaithful to God and to man in a degree hardly credible. During Josiah's reign they pretended to cast away their gross superstitions, but after his death they returned to them, as it were, with increased avidity; and with these superstitions was combined the prostration of every moral principle, and of every natural feeling. Superstition ever destroys morality, and enfeebles all the social and natural sympathies of men. What a picture of the effects of superstition is given by Jeremiah in chapter 9!

4. Notwithstanding this extremely degenerated state of things, The Jews harbored the *conviction* that their ruin, as denounced by Jeremiah, was impossible. While practically denying God, they yet rested their confidence on his promises respecting the perpetuity of David's kingdom, and on their outward privileges; taking as unconditional what was conditional, and regarding the mere possession of divine institutions as a sufficient security. And in this vain confidence they were encouraged and confirmed by false Prophets and corrupt Priests, in opposition to God's messages by his Prophet Jeremiah, and to the plain declarations of that Law, the authority of which they still ostensibly acknowledged!

These things have been recorded for our instruction.

Some of Jeremiah's Prophecies were fulfilled in the days of many of those who heard them; such as those which refer to the Captivity of the people, and to the destruction of the neighboring nations by the king of Babylon. Other prophecies extend farther, to times more remote, to the destruction of Babylon, to the restoration of the Jews after the term of seventy years, and to the destinies of various nations. There are also Prophecies respecting The Messiah, as The Lord Our Righteousness, The Evangelical Covenant,

The Call of the Gentiles, and final Restoration of The Jews. So that there are in this Book some Prophecies which were soon fulfilled, others at a more distant time, and some which are still to be fulfilled. Who but GOD, the Sole and the Supreme Ruler of the world, and the regulator and disposer of all events, could have announced such Prophecies? All those which refer to the past have been fulfilled, fully and completely; and with no less certainty shall all such as refer to what is future be in due time fulfilled. Nothing can intercept the exercise of Divine Faithfulness; nothing can obstruct the working of Infinite Power.

Facsimile copies of the old Latin, French, and English title — pages follow this Preface, with a reprint of the Dedication by Clement Cotton to the Countess Of Bedford, prefixed to his English Translation of 1620.

J. O.

Thrussington, September 1850.

Clement Cotton's Dedication

TO THE NOBLE
AND VERTVOVS LADY,
THE LADY LVCIE, COVNTESSE
of Bedford: And to the Right Honorable and highly honored Lady, the Lady *Anne Harrington,* Barrones: mercy
and peace be multiplied

Right Honorable: The holy Prophet *Jeremiah* (according to the diuers subjects he had to work upon in his ministerial function) is forced sometimes, with *Isaiah* his forerunner, to lift up his voice like unto a *Sonne of Thunder;* (Isaiah 58:1) and eftsoones, with the same Prophet againe, to altar and change the same into the still and soft voice of a *Sonne of Consolation:* (1 Kings 19:20) wherein, as God's faithful messenger, hee carries himself faithfully: For as a *Sonne of Thunder,* he sharply inueyes against the sinnes and sinners of his time, boldly denouncing God's judgements against them; and as *a Sonne of Consolation,* (for their sakes whom the Lord had appointed to bee heires of sahation,) hee sweetly preacheth Christ, mixing often with the terrible threats of the Law the sauing promises of the Gospel; that if any came, by the ministry of the one, to be pricked in conscience and humbled, (Acts 2:37) he readily, like the good Samaritan, powreth in the mollifying and healing oyle of the other to cure and reuiue them. And thus, as a wise disposer and dispenser of the manifold secrets of God, (Psalm 101:1) his song (in a manner) throughout his Prophesy (like *Aaron's* Bels — Exodus 28:33) soundeth forth judgement and mercy; preaching judgement to such as were and would be sinners in Sion, (Isaiah 33:14) and mercy to such as he saw to be mourners in Sion. (Isaiah 61:3). In which respects he may serue as a liuely patterne for all Preachers to follow in their ordinary course of preaching. These Sermons of his (many of them) doe notably sute to our

times; and therefore ought to be read, and read againe, of all estates high and low.

But for as much as in reading the Prophets sundry difficulties are met withall, which euery one hath not the skill of himself to dissolue, it would (as I think) be very beneficial for such if they had an holy helper, such an one as this, ready at hand: *An interpreter; One* (indeed) *of a thousand*, (Job 33:23) that might help to dissolve their doubts, and unloose their hard knots for them; that so understanding what they read, they might (by the blessing of God) with the more ease come to profit by their reading. This hath our *Philip* (Acts 8:34-35) faithfully performed (according to that light of understanding wherewith the Lord had extraordinarily endowed him) throughout the Prophets; and pity it is that so great light should after a sort he buried in darkness from many well minded Christians, onely because they are not (as they might be) turned into our owne natiue language.

Not many yeeres since, a Lampe (if I may so speake) began to be kindled, for giuing them some insight into the harder passages of the Prophets, by translating this Author's Commentaries vpon the Prophecie of *Isaiah* into English; but much more cleere would the light haue now shined if thereunto had been added the translation of all his Lectures vpon the Prophesie of *Ieremiah* also. For mine owne part, seeing sufficiency of oyle hath failed me to furnish out this second Lampe vnto the end, I haue for the present proceeded onely through the flue first Chapters.

The which (Right Honorable) as a testimony of that seruice and duty I owe your Honors, I have presumed (as one ouertaken with *Ahimaaz* his hast, sorewhat abruptly, I confesse) to dedicate vnto you: And if in token of your favorable acceptance thereof you shall be pleased to suffer the same to passe vnder your Honorable names and patronage, many may be occasioned thereby to blesse God for you, and my selfe still to pray, that the blessing of him who was ready to perish may come vpon you.

Your Honor's humbly
at commandment,
CLEMENT COTTON.

Calvin's Dedication

TO THE
MOST ILLUSTRIOUS PRINCE,
D. FREDERICK,
LORD PALATINE OF THE RHINE, AND ELECTOR OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE, ETC.,
AND HIS MOST BENEVOLENT LORD,
JOHN CALVIN
WISHES ALL HAPPINESS.

As your heroic valor, Most Illustrious Prince, has been acknowledged by superior men and competent judges, and especially your singular piety, your labor to cherish and to promote true Religion, and uniform moderation through life; and also your great courtesy, such as can hardly be found in a private individual, and which I have not only known by report, but have also myself experienced, I have long wished by some public act to testify to posterity the high regard I entertain for you, being not satisfied with having it only in secret. This is well known to the noble — minded Edward, the Count or Espach, whom I have consulted on the subject.

But to discharge this duty at this time, not only an opportunity seems to be offered to me, but a certain necessity appears to constrain me; for, as you have reverently embraced the sound and orthodox doctrine concerning the Holy Supper of Christ, and have not hesitated freely and wisely to avow the same in your dominion, so turbulent and unreasonable men rage against you, as though you had upset all Germany! Hence they rush headlong to assail your Highness with violent clamors; and as they cannot prevail by authority and power, being full of presumption and insolence, they hesitate not to vomit forth their curses, of which men in their right mind would be ashamed; and not only so, but as it is not in their power to kill you,

they fabricate shameful rumors respecting your death, as though a plot of flies were sufficient to darken the sun. And you, indeed, Most Illustrious Prince, according to the magnanimity of your mind, and in accordance with the high dignity in which God has placed you, do altogether disregard their mad conduct; but as they so busily labor to provoke you, and at the same time bring in my name to create an ill — will to you, I have thought it my duty, in refuting these calumnies, to set up as a shield against them the very name which they wish to make so odious; for certainly they are wholly unworthy that your Highness should raise your little finger against them, or utter the smallest word. Were I indeed disposed to expostulate with them on account of their madness in hating so much a man who has done something for the Church of God, and of whose labors they avail themselves with the unlearned, though they acknowledge it not, they would have no plea for their ingratitude. While, then, they endeavor, by bringing forward Calvinism, to affix to your Highness some mark of infamy, they do nothing more than betray their own perversity, and also their folly and disgrace. But if they think that they gain something among those who are like themselves, my voice, on the other hand, in speaking of your just praises, will, I hope, be attended to by the godly, the well — informed, and men of calm minds and sound judgment.

Unprincipled men of this character do indeed pretend and loudly exclaim that they fight for God and their country; but whether it be so, it is easy for any one to judge: and I will not indeed discuss at large their delirious notions, as the greater part of them understand not what they vainly talk; I will only touch briefly on the main points in which we differ from their masters, for whom, nevertheless, I have a sincere regard.

That we really feed in the Holy Supper on the flesh and blood of Christ, no otherwise than as bread and wine are the aliments of our bodies, we freely confess. If a clearer explanation is asked, we say, that the substance of Christ's flesh and blood is our spiritual life, and that it is communicated to us under the symbols of bread and wine; for Christ, in instituting the mystery of The Supper, promised nothing falsely, nor mocked us with a vain shew, but represented by external signs what he has really given us.

Now the question rests on the mode of communication; and hence the conflict arises, because we refuse to subscribe to their fancy respecting a local presence. We say, that though Christ is in heaven, yet through the hidden and incomprehensible power of his Spirit, this favor comes to us that His flesh becomes life to us, so that we become flesh of his flesh and bones of his bones. (Ephesians 5:30.) By them, on the contrary, it is maintained, that except Christ comes down on earth, there is no participation. That they may, however, get rid of the absurdity of a local presence, it has been found necessary to fabricate the strange notion of ubiquity; which, if we think it not possible to reconcile to the principles of faith, we must beg them at least to pardon our ignorance. Here we follow not our own understanding;

but according to the knowledge given us from above, we cannot comprehend that it is at all agreeable to Scripture to say that the body of Christ is everywhere. Both Christ himself and His Apostles clearly shew that the immensity of God does not belong to the flesh; a personal union is what they teach; and no one, except *Eutyches,* has hitherto taught, that the two natures became so blended, that when Christ became man, the attributes of Deity were communicated to his human nature. I am not indeed disposed to raise an odium against them by means of a man who has been condemned; they are yet to be reminded to think more attentively, and to consider how contention leads astray even good, learned, and acute men, when they are led away only by a desire to defend their own cause. Doubtless the best and the shortest way of confronting *Nestorius* at the Council of Ephesus would have been to say, that personal union communicates to two natures what is peculiar to each: to adduce this no one thought of doing on account of its absolute absurdity. I therefore greatly wonder that they who oppose us do not consider into what labyrinth they plunge themselves.

For if the infinity of God appertains to the flesh of Christ, because God was manifested in the flesh, with equal reason His Divinity may be said to have grieved and to have been thirsty, and to have been subject to death, and, in short, to have died; for they cannot escape, as it is a similar mode of reasoning. Christ, while yet a mortal, declared that He knew not when the day of judgment would be. Does He not in these words clearly and distinctly ascribe something to His human nature which could not justly be ascribed to His Divinity? What they bring forward as to the communication of properties, it is unreasonable, and what I may say without offending them, they mistake in a matter that is very simple and plain; for to ascribe what is peculiar to Deity to the Son of man, and again to attribute to Deity what belongs only to humanity, is very improper and rash. To prevent the ignorant from stumbling by blending together different things, and to take away from the dishonest any occasion for contending, orthodox writers have called this figure, "The communication of properties." [2]

What they have said of certain expressions, has been with little thought applied to the subject. While Christ was on earth he said that the Son of man was in heaven. That no one, ill — informed, might think Christ's body to be infinite, it has been deemed necessary to meet this case by a plain admonition, that on account of the unity of person what is suitable only to Divinity has been said of the Son of man. Paul says, as it is recorded by Luke, that God redeemed the Church by His own blood. (Acts 20:28.) Lest no one may hence conceive that God has blood, the same admonition ought to be sufficient to untie the knot; for as Christ was man and God, what is peculiar to His human nature is ascribed to His Divinity. As it was the Father's design to employ this figure of speech for the purpose of teaching the simple and ignorant, it is absurd and even shameful to apply it for a

[2] {Ιδιομάτων} {κοινώνιαν}, which may be rendered ``The communication of peculiarities.'' --- Ed

different purpose, and to say that the communication of properties is the real blending of two natures.

But Christ, it is said, sits at the Father's right hand, which is to be taken as meaning everywhere, confined within no limits. I indeed allow that God's right hand is unlimited, and that wherever it is there is the kingdom of Christ; which is metaphorically represented in Scripture by the tern sitting: for whatever is declared of God is beyond controversy to be now ascribed to Christ; and therefore to sit, which means to govern the world, is what Christ has in common with the Father; and still more, as the Father by Him sustains the world, rules all things by His power, and especially manifests the presence of His grace in governing His Church, He may be said, strictly speaking, to reign in His own person. It hence follows, that he in a manner is everywhere; for He can be limited to no place who sustains and protects all parts of heaven and earth, and rules and regulates by His power all things above and below. When now I name Christ, I include the whole Person of the only — begotten Son, as manifested in the flesh. He, I say, God and man, is everywhere as to his authority and incomprehensible power, and infinite glory, according to what the faithful experience by evident effects, as they know and feel His presence. It is not then without reason that Paul declares, that He dwells in us. (Ephesians 3:17.) But to distort what is said of His infinite power, which is evident in His spiritual gifts, in the invisible aid which He affords, and in the whole of our salvation, and to apply it to His flesh, is by no means reasonable or consistent.

I wish that many of those who are with little reason angry with us, were at least to recall to mind that common and notable saying used in the Papal Schools, "Christ is whole everywhere, but not altogether." [3] They may repeat' it as it is in the barbarous language of *Peter Lombard*, which is not pleasant to their tender and delicate ears. It is yet wisely expressed, from whomsoever it may have come, and I willingly adopt it. But I wonder whence is this daintiness! Seeing the Recantation of *Berengarius* delights *Westphalus* and those who are like him that Christ's body is broken by the teeth and digested by the stomach — why is this sober distinction to be loathed, that Christ our Mediator is every — where entire, but not as to His flesh, which is confined within certain limits, while this power is infinite, and its operation felt on earth as well as in heaven?

There are two words commonly used, Union (*unio*) and Unity (*unitas*;) the first is applied to the two Natures, and the second to the Person alone. To assert the unity of the flesh and of Divinity, those would be ashamed to do, if I am not deceived, who yet inconsiderately adopt this absurdity; for, except the flesh differs and is distinct in its own peculiar properties from the Divine nature, they are by blending together become one. They, cavilling, facetiously ask, "In what region of the empyreal heaven does Christ sit?" let them indeed enjoy these fine speculations. I am taught by the Holy Spirit,

[3] "Christus ubique totus est, sed non totum." Lib. 3, Senten. dist. 22.

that He is above all heavens, (Ephesians 4:10) according to the common mode of speaking in Scripture, I call whatever is beyond the world heaven. Hence it is enough for me, when Christ is to be sought, that our minds are to be raised above, that they may not remain on the earth and be entangled in gross superstitions.

This, then, is the sum and substance of the whole controversy, which the chief leaders of the adverse party too pertinaciously agitate, unless, indeed, we add another subject that the wicked, as they contend, partake of the flesh and blood of Christ no less than the true servants of God. And we indeed allow that they are equally offered to both; and that whatever may be the difference between men, yet God ever continues like himself the same; and that hence the difference in those who presumptuously thrust themselves does not arise from the nature of the sacrament. When, therefore, Christ gives his body to the unworthy, the difference proceeds from the manner in which it is received. But we deny that those are capable of receiving Christ whom the devil holds as his slaves, and in whom he has his habitation. We do not, however, reject the usual mode of speaking, that Christ is received by them sacramentally, provided absurd interpreters pervert not the words of *Augustine,* in which sacramental eating is said to be the reception of the substance without the grace; but this is a foolish remark, and unknown to *Augustine*. The reason they adduce, as it is weak, may easily be refuted. They say, that Christ came not only for salvation to the elect, but also for condemnation to the reprobate, because the Gospel being not received, but rejected, is the savor of death unto death to those who perish. But who has ever heard that the participation of Christ produces death? But if Christ be the occasion of condemnation to unbelievers because He is rejected by them, I see not how it can be that they procure for themselves condemnation by receiving his flesh. They answer and say, that they are, nevertheless, closed up so as not to admit His grace. But that they may gain credit to what they say, they must first prove their strange notion that those who are alienated from Christ eat His flesh, while it is to those without life destitute of its own virtue, and empty.

I have now faithfully and plainly explained why they who boast themselves to be the followers of Luther so hastily contend with us at this day. For the same reason they pour forth their execrations on *Phillip Melancthon,* now dead, a man who, for his incomparable knowledge in the highest branches of literature, his deep piety, and other endowments, deserves to be remembered by all ages, and whom they have hitherto regarded as their leader: and it is strange, that in order to obtain the favor of the public, they pretend to adopt that noble Confession Of Augsburg, of which he was especially the author, and ought to be deemed its true interpreter. I regard them as turbulent and unprincipled men, who possess no common courtesy, and feel no shame.

But there are those who, in this respect, are different, and observe some moderation: and yet I have a just reason to complain, for some of them have

acted so unfairly as to give my name in what they have published in German, and to withhold it in the Latin editions. Now this is to curse the deaf!

But, to omit other things, I revert again to their violent clamors, which are similar to the clamors of those frantic zealots, mentioned by *Josephus,* through whose excesses a cruel war was kindled, which involved Judea in entire ruin. (De Bell. Jude., lib. 14 et 15.) They can find nothing more atrocious by which they can irritate your Highness, Most Illustrious Prince, than the word Calvinism. But whence this bitter hatred towards me it is not difficult to conjecture. For as they have thought the shortest way to victory to be by suppressing and concealing the real state of the case, and by dazzling the eyes of the simple, it is no wonder that they burn with rage when the clouds of ignorance in which they securely exulted were dissipated; and what especially drives them even to madness, is the fact, that they find that the whole subject is fully and really known by you, so that the doctrine, for which they triumphed while it was unknown, having obtained the patronage of high authority, and being supported by the pious and strong defense of a wise Prince, makes a freer progress.

It would indeed be superfluous to exhort you, who are of yourself sufficiently disposed, to persevere. That you may, however, disregard their impotency, and pursue the object so happily as well as judiciously undertaken, it seems not an useless attempt to confirm you in your course by leaving a pledge of the high regard I entertain for you. And I thought it no act of ingratitude for your incredible courtesy to dedicate to your renowned name my Commentaries On Jeremiah. I indeed confess that it has not been elucidated with that care which so excellent a Book deserves; for as I delivered the Lectures from the pulpit, they were taken from my mouth; and I have indeed been before ashamed, that what might have been more accurately revised and polished by a longer meditation has come forth to light. I am also afraid lest the malevolent should accuse me of arrogance, for having obtruded on the public discourses extemporaneous and unwritten, and designed for a small auditory. It is easy to reply to the latter charge, for the first volume was sent to press against my will. That I may not, however, be without excuse, what I have to say is, that I have been led by the judgment of others. I hear of impartial and plain readers, who declare that they have received no small benefit from this kind of labor. And further, some think that a good end may be attained by making known my *extempore* mode of teaching, as its simplicity may cure many, who are too anxious of display, of that vice. Though learning and aptness to teach cannot satisfy all, I have yet carefully endeavored that Religion and Faith should not be found wanting by the impartial and well disposed. Nor do I, indeed, fear the charge of arrogance, when I fully avow, that I would have by no means suffered this Book to go forth to the public had I not thought that it would be useful and profitable to the Church of God.

But it may be that some rigid and severe critics will deem it a present

unworthy of your Highness; but relying on your rare courtesy, Most Illustrious Prince, I hope it will be favorably accepted. And if Jeremiah himself were now alive on earth, he would add, if I am not deceived, his recommendation; for he would acknowledge that his Prophecies have been explained by me not less honestly than reverently; and further, that they have been usefully accommodated to present circumstances. I feel not, however, over anxious to find an excuse, provided I know that I have done no wrong, except through an excessive desire to testify the veneration with which I regard your Highness.

But, to omit now what I have slightly mentioned at the beginning, I should condemn myself for ingratitude, were I not to consider myself under obligations to you for being so ready and disposed to receive The Christian Exiles who flee to you. It is the saying of a heathen woman, as mentioned by a poet-

"**Being** acquainted with evil, I learn to aid the miserable." [4]

Let all who worship God and serve Christ be not ashamed, under similar circumstances, to be at least of the same mind. As my power of aiding is not equal to my wish, it becomes me at least to regard every kindness shewn to them as done to myself. Thirty years have passed away since my voluntary exile from France, because thence were exiled the truth of the Gospel, pure Religion, and the true Worship of God. I am now become so inured to my peregrination, that I feel no desire to return to my country. I am indeed here so far a stranger, (though once banished, I was yet so recalled, that I never feel ashamed,) that they deem me no more a foreigner than if I could name my ancestors as the citizens of this place. But the more kindly God has dealt with me, the greater concern ought I to feel for my brethren from France as well as from Flanders: and as they have been received with the same kindness by your Highness, this stimulates and constrains me to avow my gratitude to one so much entitled to it.

Nor let it cause you any regret, Most Illustrious Prince, that you have been sometimes deceived in foreigners, and indeed in men of our language, but go on in your wonted course of benevolence. All know how basely you have been deceived by that most audacious and unprincipled man, at the same time vile, proud, and perfidious-in short, a monster, made up of a mass of filthy materials, even *Francis Baldwin,* and yet a skillful collector of the Civil Law. For having been in The University Of Heidelberg, and having, under the pretext of the Gospel, been received under your patronage, and being made a Professor of the Civil Law through your liberality in The University Of Heidelberg, he ought to have considered himself as altogether bound by kindness to so munificent a Prince; but he regarded his elevation as advantageous to him to seek, after his own manner, a new situation. Hence, as soon as hope appeared, he deserted his station, having despised the honorable office which he had fraudulently attained, and passed over to

[4] Non ignora mali, miseris succurrere disco

the enemies of true and pure Religion, the name of which he had assumed. And first indeed (as though he retained some portion of shame) he went on stealthily in a clandestine manner, he discussed some secret treacheries with *The Cardinal of Lorraine,* into whose favor he had insinuated himself. The object of the whole was to subvert the Churches Of France by means of a spurious doctrine and a mixture of ceremonies. But as there appeared no reward for masked and hidden perfidy, he not only rushed headlong into open defection, but so insolently boasted of his wickedness, that he has surpassed similar apostates in canine wantonness. It is however well, that the perfidy of one unprincipled man does not stop the course of your kindness towards others; and you have some recompense for your perseverance, for among the ornaments of your University are to be found some foreigners well known for their high character, whom it is unnecessary for me to name.

Though I can add nothing to the character of your Highness, either by my praise or by the dedication of this Work, yet I could not restrain myself from doing what I thought to be my duty. Farewell, Most Illustrious Prince. May God enrich you more and more with His spiritual gifts, keep you long in safety, and render your dignified station prosperous to you and yours.

GENEVA, *July* 23, 1563.

Printer's to the Reader

THE PRINTER TO THE CHRISTIAN READER,
HEALTH.

Though Readers were sufficiently reminded, when the Lectures of the beloved and learned John Calvin, on The Minor Prophets and on Daniel, were published, by what means and by whom they had been attained, so that it is to no purpose to sing the same song, for so would I seem to do, were I again to explain at large what has been before set forth; it is yet necessary, if I am not mistaken, to add now, that these Lectures On Jeremiah and the Lamentations were taken down by our two brethren, *John Budeus* and *Charles Jonville,* with the same care, fidelity, and diligence as the former Lectures, which cannot but appear to every one who will attentively read them.

The Hebrew Text has not been inserted; and among other things, for this reason, because it is already possessed by those who understand the language, and to others it would be of no advantage. We were also afraid, that by increasing the Volume and the expense, we should unnecessarily charge the buyer.

But that I may not be prolix and tedious, I pass by the great and manifold benefit that may be derived from this Volume, which will appear to each one better when it is read: for it is so replete with the precious wealth of heavenly Truth, that from it, as from a storehouse, may be drawn the sum and substance of Religion; and so it will no doubt be of great service to the whole Church of God.

It remains for you, Christian Reader, to ascribe to God alone whatever benefit you may derive from these Commentaries; and to pray for Calvin, who well deserves this from all the godly, until he shall at length enjoy his eternal inheritance. Make use also thankfully of this so valuable a treasure,

and judge kindly and impartially of what is cordially presented to you.

GENEVA, *July* 23, 1576.

Calvin's Prayer

THE PRAYER
WHICH JOHN CALVIN WAS WONT TO USE AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS LECTURES:

MAY the Lord grant, that we may engage in contemplating the mysteries of his heavenly wisdom with really increasing devotion, to his glory and to our edification. AMEN.

Calvin's Preface to Jeremiah

CALVIN'S PREFACE
TO THE BOOK OF
THE PROPHET JEREMIAH.

Lecture First.

After having explained The Twelve Minor Prophets, we reached at length to the end of Daniel. I now undertake to explain The Book Of Jeremiah, provided life be spared and leisure be given me. But if through God's grace time will be allowed, there will remain still one Prophet, that is, Ezekiel; which I hope will be undertaken by a more competent Interpreter.

As to Jeremiah, it must be first observed, that he commenced his office as a Prophet under Josiah, and in the thirteenth year of his reign, who was a sincere servant of God, and yet the state of things was then very confused: the Book of the Law was unknown; so that every one indulged his fancy in inventing many impious forms of worship. No doubt at a time when such liberty prevailed, there were many turbulent men laboring to pervert the worship of God and pure doctrine, and fabricating for themselves many absurd things. For if the priests taught rightly, they must have derived all their knowledge from the Law: and though it is probable, that the memory of it was not wholly lost, yet a few fragments only remained, so that they could not with certainty learn how the Church was to be regulated according to what had been received from above. For it is related in sacred history, that the Book was found in the eighteenth year of Josiah, (2 Chronicles 34:8, 15;) so that Jeremiah had been then teaching for four, and even for five years.

Now this fact clearly proves how great is the carelessness and sloth of men in the great concerns of Religion. God had commanded Moses, that a copy of the Law should not only be kept reverently and carefully in the Temple,

but also by the kings themselves, (Deuteronomy 17:18;) and there was also added a command, that the whole Law should be read to the people at their festivals. (Deuteronomy 31:11.) But when the kings departed from the true worship of God, no copy of the Law was preserved by them: and at length the whole Law became as it were extinct. No doubt this happened through the tyranny of King Manasse, who cruelly raged against the priests and against all the other servants of God. Wherever only a spark of religion appeared, he was intent on slaughter; so that blood, as sacred history testifies, flowed through all the streets of Jerusalem. (2 Kings 21:16.) It was then no wonder, if he took away from the Temple all the copies of the Law found there, in order to extinguish all memory of true doctrine. However, a book, which had been hid, was found, as we are told, by the priest Hilkiah.

The first thing then to be observed is the time when he began to teach: as religion was then so corrupted, and every one invented errors to suit his own humor, the office of Jeremiah must have been hard and arduous.

Secondly, the termination of his ministry must be noticed. He says, that from that time he pursued his office until the transmigration. He therefore continued in his course for forty years. We shall hereafter see what hard contests he had to undergo during his life. But had the people been teachable, he could not have performed what God had commanded him without great pain and even weariness: for we shall presently see what was the doctrine which he was commanded to proclaim. As then he was assiduous in his labor for forty years, we hence perceive with what a courageous spirit he was endued. If we further consider what storms had been raised, calculated to cast him down from his high station, and even wholly to drive him from the right way, more clearly still will shine forth the invincible firmness of his mind and his zeal; for he never desisted from executing the office committed to him.

We must further observe, that after the city was cut off, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were led captives into Babylon, Jeremiah still continued to discharge his office. He was indeed drawn into Egypt, as we learn from the end of his Book, especially from chapter 44 (Jeremiah 44); nay, he was taken there by force, while yet he pronounced a curse on all the Jews who sought hiding — places in Egypt. Though he was forced to go there, yet it much lessened his authority; for we know that ungodly men lay hold on any pretense for evil — speaking. There was here a specious pretense; "He cursed, "they said, "all who went to Egypt, and now where does he dwell himself? In Egypt with the other refugees." No doubt the faith of the holy man was shaken by these banterings: ungodliness has been wanton in all ages. There, then, after the destruction of the city, Jeremiah was constrained to bend his course: and it may be, that he persevered in his work and labor beyond fifty years. It is said, that he was stoned to death, and not unlikely, for he inveighed with no less severity against the Jews who had fled into Egypt, than against the city while it was standing; and despair might have roused

them into madness. It is hence probable that they slew the holy Prophet, and thought this lawful because he upbraided them with their miseries, while his object was to correct their perverseness, which was untamable; and this they did not consider.

I come now to The Contents of the Book. As Isaiah and the other Prophets spent their labor almost in vain, nothing remained for Jeremiah but briefly to announce this sentence, — "There is now no pardon, but it is the time of extreme vengeance, for they have too long abused God's forbearance, who has borne with them, kindly and even sweetly exhorted them to repent, and testified that he would be exorable and propitious, provided they returned to the right way." Since then God's kindness had been despised by them, it became necessary for Jeremiah to fulminate against them as men lost and in a hopeless state of perverseness. The main thing then in his teaching was this:

"It is all over with the kingdom and the priesthood; for the Jews have so often and in such various ways, and for so long a time, provoked God's wrath and rejected the pious warnings of his servants."

Isaiah also in his time used threatenings; but we see that to mitigate what was terrible, some hope of pardon was added whenever he spoke with severity. But after the ten tribes had been carried into exile, and the kingdom had been visited with various calamities, while the Jews still continued impenitent, and even hardened themselves more and more under God's scourges, it was necessary, as I have said, that he should deal more sharply with them. God had contended with them by Isaiah and the other prophets; by Jeremiah and also by Ezekiel, he proved them guilty, and denounced on them the sentence of condemnation. This difference between the teaching of Isaiah and that of our Prophet, ought to be noticed. [5] At the same time, that Jeremiah's teaching might not be imperfect, it was God's purpose that he should be also the herald of his grace and of the salvation promised in Christ. This exception, however, ought to be borne in mind, that he offered them no hope of mercy until they had suffered the punishment due to their sins.

We now then understand what Jeremiah mainly taught: but particulars will be better and more distinctly understood by readers by following the course of the text. And I do not now treat in general of what is to be found in the prophets; for this is what I have done elsewhere. I now then say only, that Jeremiah was sent by God to proclaim to the people their last calamity; and also to speak to them of their future redemption, and at the same time, ever to remind them of the interposition of seventy years in exile. I come now to the words.

[5] Scott says that Jeremiah "entered upon the prophetic office almost seventy years after the death of Isaiah." — Ed

Chapter 1

CHAPTER 1

Jeremiah 1:1-3

1. The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin:

1. Verba Jeremiae filii Helkiae, ex sacerdotibus qui erant in Anathoth, in terra Benjamin,

2. To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

2. Nempe ({אשר} explicative hic ponitur) fecit sermo Jehovae ad ipsum, in diebus Josiea, filii Amon, regis Jehudah, decimo tertio anno regm ejus;

3. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

3. Et fuit (hoc est, perrexit in, cursum vocationis suae) diebus Joakim, filii Josiae, regis Jehudah, usque ad complementum undecimi anni Zedechiae, filii Josiae, regis Jehudah, ad transmigrationem Jerusalem, mense quinto.

I Have said that the time, when Jeremiah began to discharge his office of a Prophet in God's Church, is not stated here without reason, and that it was when the state of the people was extremely corrupt, the whole of Religion having become vitiated, because the Book of the Law was lost: for nowhere else can be found the rule according to which God is to be worshipped; nor can right knowledge be obtained from any other source. It was then, at the time when impiety had by a long custom prevailed among the Jews, that Jeremiah suddenly came forth. There was then laid on his shoulders the heaviest burden; for many enemies must have risen to oppose him, when he attempted to bring back the people to the pure doctrine of the law, which the greater part were then treading under their feet.

He calls himself the *son of Hilkiah* The Rabbins think that this Hilkiah was the priest by whom the Book of Moses was found five years after: but this seems not to me probable. The conjecture also of *Jerome* is very frivolous, who concludes that the Prophet was a boy when he began to prophesy, because he calls himself {נער} (*nor*,) a child, a little farther on, as though he did not use the word metaphorically. [6] At what age he was called to the prophetic office, we do not know; it is, however, probable that he was of mature age, for it was a work of high authority; and further, had he been a youth, doubtless such a miracle would not have been passed over in silence, that is, that he was made a prophet before the age of maturity.

With regard to his father, it is nothing strange that the Rabbins have regarded him as the high priest; for we know that they are always prone to vain boastings. Ambition possessed them, and hence they have said that Jeremiah was the son of the high priest, in order to add to the splendor of his character. But what does the Prophet himself say? He declares indeed that he was the son of Hilkiah, but does not say that this was the high priest; on the contrary he adds, that he was *from the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin* Now we know that this was a mean village, not far from Jerusalem; and Jeremiah says, that it was in the tribe of Benjamin. Its nearness to Jerusalem may be gathered from the words of Isaiah, who says that small Anathoth was terrified. (Isaiah 10:30) He threatened Jerusalem by saying that the enemy was near.

"What," he says, "is your security? Ye can hear the noise of your enemies and the groans of your brethren from your very gates; for Anathoth is not far from you, being only three miles distant."

Since then Jeremiah only says, that he came from Anathoth, why should we suppose him to be the sort of the high priest? And frivolous is what the Chaldee paraphraser adds here, that Hilkiah had possessions in the town of Anathoth, as though it was allowed the priests to possess land: God allowed them only what was necessary to feed their flocks. We may then take it as certain, and what the Prophet indeed expressly declares, that he came from the village of Anathoth. [7]

[6] The word does not properly mean a "child," as in our version, or "puer," as rendered by Calvin, but a youth, or rather a young man. Abraham's trained servants were thus called, Genesis 14:24, and his servant who dressed the calf for the angels, Genesis 18:7, and his "young men" who accompanied him to Mount Moriah, Genesis 22:5. Joshua had this name given him, when he was attending Moses at the tabernacle, Exodus 33:11. It is rendered "({νεωτερος})-a youth or a young man,`` by the Septuagint The most probable thing is, that he was, not as Adam Clarke supposes, about 14, but a young man verging on maturity. The length of time during which he prophesied, would lead us to conclude that he was young when he was appointed to his office. There are two remarkable resemblances between Jeremiah and Moses. They both made an excuse for declining the office to which God called them, and made a similar excuse. The other resemblance is what Lightfoot has noticed, that Moses was a teacher of the people for forty years before they entered the land of Canaan, and that Jeremiah was their teacher for forty years before they were banished from it and driven into exile. --- Ed.

[7] The reasons alleged against Jeremiah being the son of the high priest are by no means conclusive: indeed, all the circumstances being considered, the probability is in favor of that supposition. The family of the high priest resided no doubt at Anathoth; what is said in 1 Kings 2:26, respecting Abiathar, is a proof of this. That the high priest resided at Jerusalem during the term of his office forms no objection; nor is the genealogy of the high priests as given in 1 Chronicles 6:1-17, any objection; for though in verse 13, Azariah is said to be the son of Hilkiah, yet Jeremiah might have been one of his younger sons. Most commentators agree indeed with

He further says, that he was of the *priestly* order. Hence the prophetic office was more suitable to him than to many of the other prophets, such as Amos and Isaiah. God took Isaiah from the court, as he was of the royal family, and made him a prophet. Amos was in a different situation: he was taken from the shepherds, for he was a shepherd. Since God appointed such prophets over his Church, he no doubt thus intended to cast a reflection on the idleness and sloth of the priests. For, though all the priests were not prophets, yet they ought to have been taken from that order; for the priestly order was as it were the nursery of the prophets. But when gross want of knowledge and ignorance prevailed among them, God chose his prophets from the other tribes, and thus exposed and condemned the priests. They ought, indeed, to have been the messengers of the God of hosts, so as to keep the law in their lips, that the people might seek it from their mouth, according to what is said by Malachi. (Malachi 2:7) But as they were dumb dogs, God transferred the honor of the prophetic office to others; but Jeremiah, as I have already stated, was a prophet as well as a priest.

He begins in the second verse to speak of his calling. [8] It would have, indeed, been to little purpose, had he said that he came forth and brought a message; but he explains, in the second verse, that he brought nothing but what had been delivered to him by God, as though he had said, that he faithfully declared what God had commanded him. For we know that the whole authority belongs entirely to God, with regard to the doctrine of religion, and that it is not in the power of men to blend this or that, and to make the faithful subject to themselves. As God, then, is the only true teacher of the Church, whosoever demands to be heard, must prove that he is God's minister. This is, then, what Jeremiah is now carefully doing, for he says that the *word of Jehovah* was given to him.

He had before said, *the words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah;* but any one of the people might have objected and said, "Why dost thou intrude thyself, as though any one is to be heard? for God claims this right to himself alone." Hence Jeremiah, by way of correction, subjoins, that the words were his, but that he was not the author of them, but the minister only. He says, then, that he only executed what God had commanded, for he had been the disciple of God himself, before he undertook the office of a teacher.

As to the beginning of his time and its termination, it has been briefly shewn, why he says that he had been chosen a prophet *in the thirteenth year*

Calvin, -Gataker, Henry, Scott, Blayney, etc.; but they adduce no satisfactory reasons, sufficient to invalidate the opinion of the Rabbins and the intimation contained in the Targum: and this opinion is what the translators of the Geneva Bible have adopted. — Ed.

[8] The second verse begins with {אשר which Calvin renders ``nempeeven,`` and takes it in an exegetic sense: but this is not its meaning. Our version is no doubt correct, ``to whom;'' though there is no preposition before it, it is yet found before the personal pronoun ``to him,`` that comes afterwards. It is an idiom of the language, and the very same exists in Welsh, in which the version is literally the same with the Hebrew a relative pronoun without a preposition followed by a personal pronoun with a preposition profixed to it. It would be literally in English, ``whom the word of Jehovah came to him.'' The Welsh also retains the peculiarity of the Hebrew, in having prepositions prefixed to pronouns and attached to them, though this is not the case generally with nouns, Yr hwn y daeth gair Jehova atto. The verb too, as in the Hebrew, precedes its nominative; ``came'' is before ``the word of Jehovah.'' It is rather singular that the Septuagint have rendered this relative by ``{ὡσ} --- as,'' which shews that the Hebrew idiom was not understood by them. --- Ed.

of Josiah, and that he discharged his office till *the eleventh year of Zedekiah.*

Now that *Josiah is called the son of Amon,* it is doubtful whether Josiah was properly his son. Amon began to reign in his twenty-second year, and reigned only two years. Josiah succeeded him in the eighth year of his age. If we number the years precisely, Josiah must have been born when Amon was in his sixteenth year; but it does not appear likely, that Amon was a father when he was sixteen years of age, for in this case he must have begotten a son in his fifteenth year; as the birth must have taken place nine months after. Then Josiah must have been begotten in the fifteenth year of Amon's age. It is hence a probable conclusion, that he was a son by law and not by nature, according to what is afterwards said of Zedekiah, that he was Josiah's son, because he was his successor, while he was, as many think, his nephew, a brother's son. But it was a common thing to call the successors of kings their sons, who were their sons by law, and not, as I have said, by nature. It now follows-

Jeremiah 1:4-5

4. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

4. Et fuit sermo Jehova ad me dicendo,

5. Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

5. Antequam formarem to in utero novi to, et antequam egressus esses e vulva sanetificavi to, Prophetam in gentibus constituite.

Here Jeremiah explains more fully what he had already mentioned that he had been called from above, for otherwise he would have presumptuously obtruded himself: for no one, as the Apostle says, takes this honor to himself; but the call of God alone raises up prophets and teachers to their dignity {see Hebrews 5:4}. Hence, that Jeremiah might secure attention, he declares that he had been called to the prophetic office, and that by the clear voice of God. For this purpose, he says, that this *word* was given him, *Before I formed thee in the womb* [9] *I knew thee* He introduces God as the speaker, that what he declares might be more emphatical, that it might be of more weight and more forcible: for, if he had said simply in his own person, that he had been made a prophet by God's voice, it would not have so much moved the hearers; but when he brings forward God as the speaker, there is necessarily more weight and force in what is said.

I pass by here what might be more largely said on what is necessary in one's call, so that he may be attended to by God's people; for no one, by his own and private right, can claim this privilege of speaking, as I have already said, inasmuch as this is what belongs to God alone. But I have elsewhere spoken at large on the prophetic call; it is therefore enough now to point at such things as these as it were by the finger: and particular discussions must

[9] More strictly, "in the inside," or belly, {.{בטן The specific term for womb is in the next sentence, .{רחם} --- Ed

be sought elsewhere; for were I to dwell at large on every subject, my work would be endless. I will, therefore, according to my usual practice, give a brief exposition of this Prophet.

Jeremiah then says, that he had been *called by God,* for this end, that he might on this account gain a hearing from the people. God declares that he *knew* Jeremiah before he *formed* him *in the womb.* This is not said specially of the Prophet, as though other men are unknown to God, but it is to be understood of the prophetic office, as though he had said, "Before I formed thee in the womb, I destined thee for this work, even that thou mayest undertake the burden of a teacher among the people." And the second part is a repetition, when he says, *Before thou camest forth from the womb I sanctified thee* Sanctification is the same as the knowledge of God: and thus we perceive that knowledge is not mere prescience, but that predestination, by which God chooses every single individual according to his own will, and at the same time appoints and also sanctifies him; for no one, as Paul declares, (2 Corinthians 2:16,) is according to his own nature fitted for the work. Since then this fitness is the gratuitous gift of God, it is nothing strange that God declares that he had *sanctified* Jeremiah, as though he had said, "I formed thee man in the womb, and at the same time appointed thee for this particular work; and as it was not in thy power to bring with thee a qualification for the prophetic office, I formed thee not only a man, but a prophet." This is the import of the passage.

But they refine too much, who think that the Prophet was sanctified from the womb as John the Baptist was, for the words mean no such thing; but only that is testified of Jeremiah, which Paul also affirms respecting himself in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, that he was known by God before he was born. Jeremiah then was not actually sanctified in the womb, but set apart according to God's predestination and hidden purpose; that is, God chose him then to be a Prophet. It may be asked, whether he was not chosen before the creation of the world? To this it may be readily answered, that he was indeed foreknown by God before the world was made; but Scripture accommodates itself to the measure of our capacities, when it speaks of the generation of any one: it is then the same as though God had said of Jeremiah, that he was formed man for this end that in due time he might come forth a Prophet.

And no doubt the following clause is added exegetically, *A prophet for the nations I made thee* His sanctification, then, as I have said, was not real, but intimated that he was appointed a Prophet before he was born.

It however seems strange that he was given a Prophet *to the nations* God designed him to be the minister of his Church; for he neither went to the Ninevites, as Jonah did, (Jonah 3:3,) nor traveled into other countries, but spent his labors only among the tribe of Judah; why then is it said that he was given as a Prophet *to the nations*? To this I answer, that though God appointed him especially for his Church, yet his teaching belonged to other

nations, as we shall presently see, and very evidently, as we proceed; for he prophesied concerning the Babylonians, the Egyptians, and the Moabites; in short, he included all the nations who were nigh and known to the Jews. This was indeed as it were accidental: but though he was given as a Prophet especially to his own people, yet his authority extended to heathen nations. No doubt *nations* are mentioned, including many, in order that the power and dignity of his teaching might appear more evident. It follows-

Jeremiah 1:6-7

6. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

6. Et dixi, Ahah, Domine Jehova, ecce non novi loqui, quia puer ego.

7. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

7. Et dixit Jehova ad me, Ne dicas, Puer ego (id est, sum puer,) quia ad quaecunque to misero, ibis, et quaeunque tibi praecepero, loqueris.

After having spoken of his call, the Prophet adds, that he at first refused his office, and he states this for two reasons; first, that he might clear himself from every suspicion of rashness, for we know how much ambition prevails among men, according to what James intimates, that many wish to be teachers, (James 3:1) and there is hardly one who is not anxious to be listened to. Since, then, most men too readily assume the office of teaching, and many boldly intrude into it, Jeremiah, in order to avoid the very suspicion of rashness, informs us that he was constrained to take the office. Secondly, he says that he refused the office, that he might gain more esteem, and render his disciples more attentive. But why did he refuse to obey God, when called to the prophetic function? Because its difficulty frightened him: and yet this very reason ought to rouse readers to a greater attention, as it no doubt awakened hearers when Jeremiah spoke to them.

If any one asks, whether Jeremiah acted rightly in refusing what God enjoined? the answer is, that God pardoned his servant, for it was not his design to reject his call, or to exempt himself from obedience, or to shake off the yoke, because he regarded his own leisure, or his own fame, or any similar considerations: Jeremiah looked on nothing of this kind; but when he thought of himself, he felt, that he was wholly unequal to undertake an office so arduous. Hence the excuse that is added is that of modesty. We then see that God forgave his timidity, for it proceeded, as we have just said, from a right feeling; and we know that from good principles vices often arise. But it was yet a laudable thing in Jeremiah, that he thought himself not sufficiently qualified to undertake the prophetic office, and that he wished to be excused, and that another should be chosen endued with more courage and with better qualifications. I shall proceed with what remains tomorrow.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast not only provided for thine ancient Church, by choosing Jeremiah as thy servant, but hast also designed

that the fruit of his labors should contilme to our age, O grant that we may not be unthankful to thee, but that we may so avail ourselves of so great a benefit, that the fruit of it may appear in us to the glory of thy name; may we learn so entirely to devote ourselves to thy service, and each of us be so attentive to the work of his calling, that we may strive with united hearts to promote the honor of thy name, and also the kingdom of thine only — begotten Son, until we finish our warfare, and come at length into that celestial rest, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only Son. Amen.

Lecture Second

We mentioned yesterday the reason why Jeremiah refused the office of teaching, even because he thought himself unequal to the work; and for this reason he called himself a child, not in age, but in knowledge. Hence the word "child" is to be taken metaphorically; for thereby the Prophet confessed that he was not sufficiently qualified as to knowledge and practice. Some, as I have said, have unwisely applied this to his age. Though then he was of a mature age, yet he called himself a child, because of his unskillfulness, and because he possessed not the gifts necessary for an office so important. [10]

Now follows the answer given to him, *Say not, I am a child; for thou shalt go, etc.* God not only predicts here what the Prophet was to do, but declares also what he designed him to do, and what he required from him, as though he had said, "It is thy duty to obey, because I have the right to command: thou must, therefore, go wheresoever I shall send thee, and thou must also proclaim whatsoever I shall command thee." By these words God reminds him that he was his servant, and that there was no reason why a sense of his own weakness should make him afraid; for it ought to have been enough for him simply to obey his command.

And it is especially necessary to know this doctrine: for as we ought to undertake nothing without considering what our strength is, so when God enjoins anything, we ought, immediately to obey his word as it were with closed eyes. Prudence is justly praised by writers; and it is what ought to be attended to by all generally; they ought to consider what the shoulders can bear, and cannot bear. For whence is it that many have so much audacity and boldness, except that they hurry on through extreme self — confidence? Hence, in all undertakings, this should be the first thing, that every one should weigh well his own strength, and take in hand what comports with the measure of his capacity. Then no one would foolishly obtrude himself, and arrogate to himself more than what is right. But when God calls us, we

[10] The words admit of two meanings. {{ידעתי}-{לא ו}-{דבר} have not known word, or, I know not word. The phrase may signify, I have no word to say, or, I know not how to say a word. The first meaning is what the context seems to countenance. The answer given to him refers to his two objections --- that he had no word to say, and that he was a young man. The last is first answered, according to the usual mode of writing adopted by the prophets, ``To every one whom I shall send thee to, thou shalt go;'' and then the first objection is removed, ``and everything that I shall command thee, thou shalt speak.'' The answer goes on, and refers to the points in the same order, ``Fear not;'' and then to remedy the want complained of; Jehovah is represented as putting his words in his mouth, so that he might have what was necessary for him to say. God promised courage though he was young, and gave him a message to deliver: thus his two objections were removed. We meet with a similar phrase in Jeremiah 6:15; Jeremiah 8:12, which is, literally, ``and shame they know not.'' --- Ed.

ought to obey, however deficient we may in all things be: and this is what we learn from what God says here, *Say not, I am a child;* that is, "though thou, indeed, thinkest thyself destitute of every qualification, though thou art conscious of thine own weakness, yet thou *shalt go,* thou must go wheresoever I shall send thee." God, then, requires this honor to be simply conceded to him, that men should obey his commands, though the qualification necessary to execute them be wanting. It afterwards follows —

Jeremiah 1:8

8. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

8. Ne timeas a facie ipsorum, quia tecum ego (id est, ego sum tecum) ad eripiendum to, dicit Jehova.

We may learn from this verse that Jeremiah, when he observed the heavy and hard conflicts he had to undertake, was greatly disturbed; for he had not courage enough firmly and boldly to assail enemies so many and so violent. He indeed saw, that he had to do with a degenerated people, who had almost all departed from the law of God: and since they had for many years shaken off the yoke, and were petulantly exulting in their freedom, it was difficult to bring them back to obedience, and to a right course of life. It hence appears that the Prophet was restrained by this difficulty, so as not to venture to undertake the prophetic office. But God applied a suitable remedy to his fear; for what does he say? *Fear not their face* It appears, then, that when Jeremiah said that he was a child, he had in view, as I have already hinted, the difficulty of the undertaking; he could hardly bear to carry on contests so severe with that rebellious people, who had now become hardened in their wickedness. We hence see how he refused, in an indirect manner, the burden laid on him, for he ventured, not openly and ingenuously, and in plain words, to confess how the matter was; but God, who penetrates into the hearts of men, and knows all their hidden feelings and motives, heals his timidity by saying, *Fear not their face.* [11]

Now this passage shews that corruptions had so prevailed among the chosen people, that no servant of God could peaceably perform his office. When prophets and teachers have to do with a teachable people, they have no need to fight: but when there is no fear of God, and no regard for him, yea, when men are led away by the violence of their lusts, no godly teacher can exercise his duty without being prepared for war. This, then, is what God intimates, when he bids his Prophet to be courageous; for he saw that there would be as many enemies as professed themselves to be the children of Abraham.

The reason, also, for boldness and confidence, that is added, ought to be noticed, *For I am with thee to deliver thee* By these words God reminds

[11] The proper rendering is, "Fear not before them," or, on their account: {{מפני is invariably a preposition, before, from before, because of, on account of, for, by, through; Deuteronomy 2:21; Exodus 14:19; Deuteronomy 7:19; Jeremiah 6:13; and it is often, though not always, so rendered in our version. The very same phrase is found in Joshua 11:6, and rendered, ``Be not afraid, because of them;'' and also in this book, Jeremiah 41:18, ``They were afraid of them.'' It may, indeed, be rendered, ``Fear them not,'' or, ``Be not afraid of them.'' To introduce ``face'' or ``faces'' is by no means right. Gataker's rendering is, ``Fear not before them;'' and Blayney's, ``Be not thou afraid because of them.'' --- Ed

the Prophet, that there would be sufficient protection in his power, so that he had no need to dread the fury of his own nation. It was, indeed, at first, a formidable undertaking, when Jeremiah saw that he had to carry on war, not with a few men, but with the whole people; but God sets himself in opposition to all men, and says, *I am with thee*, [12] fear not. We hence see that due honor is then conceded to God, when being content with his defense we disregard the fury of men, and hesitate not to contend with all the ungodly, yea, though they may rise up in a mass against us: and were their forces and power the strongest, we ought yet to feel assured that the defense of God alone is sufficient to protect us. This is the full meaning of the passage. It now follows-

Jeremiah 1:9-10

9. Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

9. Et extendit Jehova manum suam, et tetigit os meum; et dixit Jehova ad me, Ecce posui verba mea in ore tuo:

10. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

10. Vide, constitui to (vel, praefeci) hodie super gentes et super regna, ad evellendum et ad destruendum et ad eruendum et ad perdendum, ad aedificandum et ad plantandum.

Here Jeremiah speaks again of his calling, that his doctrine might not be despised, as though it proceeded from a private individual. He, therefore, testifies again, that he came not of himself, but was sent from above, and was invested with the authority of a prophet. For this purpose he says, that God's words were put in his mouth.

This passage ought to be carefully observed; for Jeremiah briefly describes how a true call may be ascertained, when any one undertakes the office of a teacher in the Church: it is ascertained even by this when he brings nothing of his own, according to what Peter says in his first canonical epistle,

"Let him who speaks, speak as the oracles of God,"
(1 Peter 4:11)

that is, let him not speak doubtingly, as though he introduced his own glosses; but let him boldly, and without hesitation, speak in the name of God. So also Jeremiah in this place, in order that he might demand to be heard, plainly declares that the words of God were put in his mouth. Let us, then, know, that whatever proceeds from the wit of man, ought to be disregarded; for God wills this honor to be conceded to him alone, as it was stated yesterday, to be heard in his own Church. It hence follows, that none ought to be acknowledged as God's servants, that no prophets or teachers ought to be counted true and faithful, except those through whom God

[12] "Earthly kings and sovereigns," observes Gataker on this verse, "are not wont to go with those whom they send on embassage; God goeth along with those whom he sends, and is by his powerful protection, at all times and in all places, present with them." — Ed.

speaks, who invent nothing themselves, who teach not according to their own fancies, but faithfully deliver what God has committed to them.

A visible symbol was added, that there might be a stronger confirmation: but there is no reason to make this a general rule, as though it were necessary that the tongues of all teachers should be touched by the hand of God. There are here two things — the thing itself, and the external sign. As to the thing itself, a rule is prescribed to all God's servants, that they bring not their own inventions, but simply deliver, as from hand to hand, what they have received from God. But it was a special thing as to Jeremiah, that God, by stretching out his hand, *touched his mouth;* it was, that he might openly shew that his mouth was consecrated to himself. It is therefore sufficient as to the ministers of the word, that their tongues be consecrated to God, so that they may not mix any of their own fictions with his pure doctrine. But it was God's will, as to Jeremiah, to add also the visible signs of the thing itself, by extending his hand and touching his mouth.

God having now shewn that Jeremiah's mouth was consecrated to himself, and separated from common and profane use, proceeds to invest him with power: *See*, he says, *I have set thee this day over nations and over kingdoms* By these words God shews how reverently he would have his word received, even when conveyed by frail mortals. There is no one who pretends not, that he desires to obey God, but yet hardly one in a hundred really receives his word. For as soon as he speaks, almost all raise a clamor; or if they dare not furiously, and in a hostile manner, oppose it, we yet see how some evade it, and others secretly oppose it. The authority, then, which God ascribes to his own word, ought to be noticed by us: *Behold, I have set thee over nations and kingdoms*

Farther, by saying, *See, I have set thee,* he encourages the Prophet to be magnanimous in spirit. He was to remember his calling, and not timidly or servilely to flatter men, or to shew indulgence to their lusts and passions: *See,* he says. We may hence perceive, that teachers cannot firmly execute their office except they have the majesty of God before their eyes, so that in comparison with him they may disregard whatever splendor, pomp, or power there may be in men. Experience indeed teaches us, that the sight of men, whatever dignity they may possess, be it the least, brings fear with it. Why are prophets and teachers sent? That they may reduce the world to order: they are not to spare their hearers, but freely reprove them whenever there may be need; they are also to use threatenings when they find men perverse. But when there is any dignity connected with men, the teacher dares not to offend; he is afraid of those who are invested with power, or who possess wealth, or a high character for prudence, or who are endued with great honors. In such cases there is no remedy, except teachers set God before their eyes, and regard him to be himself the speaker. They may thus with courageous and elevated minds look down on whatever height and pre — eminence there may be among mortals. This, then, is the object of

what God says here, *See, I have set thee over nations and kingdoms;* for he shews that there is so much authority in his word, that whatever is high and exalted on earth is made subject to it; even kings are not excepted.

But what God has joined together let no man separate. (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9) God indeed extols here his Prophets above the whole world, and even above kings; but he has previously said, *Behold, I have put my words, in thy mouth;* so that whosoever claims such a power, must necessarily bring forth the word of God, and really prove that he is a prophet, and that he introduces no fictions of his own. And hence we see how fatuitous is the boasting of the Pope, and of his filthy clergy, when they wickedly dare to appropriate to themselves what is here said. "We *are,* "they say, "above both kings and nations." By what right? "God hath thus spoken by the Prophet Jeremiah." But these two things are to be joined together — *I have put my words in thy mouth,* and, *I have set thee over nations and kingdoms* Now let the Pope shew that he is furnished with the word of God, that he claims for himself nothing that is his own, of apart from God; in a word, that he introduces nothing of his own devices, and we shall willingly allow that he is pre — eminent above the whole world. For God is not to be separated from his word: as his majesty shines eminently above the whole world, yea, and above all the angels of heaven; so there is the same dignity belonging to his word. But as these swine and dogs are empty of all true doctrine and piety, what effrontery it is, yea, what stupidity, to boast that they have authority over kings and nations! We, in short, see from the context, that men are not here so much extolled, though they be true ministers of celestial truth, as the truth itself; for God ascribes here the highest authority to his own word, though its ministers were men of no repute, poor and despised, and having nothing splendid connected with them. The purpose for which this was said I have already explained; it was, that true prophets and teachers may take courage, and thus boldly set themselves against kings and nations, when armed with the power of celestial truth.

He then adds, *To root up, to destroy, to pull down, to lay waste* God seems here to have designedly rendered odious his own word and the ministry of the Prophet; for the word of God in the mouth of Jeremiah could not have been acceptable to the Jews, except they perceived that it was for their safety and welfare: but God speaks here of ruin and destruction, of cutting down and desolation. But he subjoins, *to build and to plant* God then ascribes two effects to his word, that on the one hand it *destroys, pulls down, lays waste, cuts off;* and that on the other it *plants and builds*

But it may, however, be rightly asked, why does God at first speak of ruin and extermination? The order would have seemed better had he said first, I set thee to *build* and to *plant,* according to what is said by Paul, who declares that vengeance was prepared by him and the other teachers against all despisers, and against all the height of the world, when your obedience, he says, shall be completed. (2 Corinthians 10:5, 6.) Paul then intimates

that the doctrine of the gospel is properly, and in the first place, designed for this end — to call men to the service of God. But Jeremiah here puts ruin and destruction before building and planting. It then seems, as I have said, that he acts inconsistently. But we must ever bear in mind what the state of the people was: for impiety, perverseness, and hardened iniquity had for so long a time prevailed, that it was necessary to begin with ruin and eradication; for Jeremiah could not have planted or have built the temple of God, except he had first destroyed, pulled down, laid waste, and cut off. How so? Because the Devil had erected there his palace; for as true religion had been for many years despised, the Devil was there placed, as it were, on his high throne, and reigned uncontrolled at Jerusalem, and through the whole land of Judea. How, then, could he have built there a temple for God, in which he might be purely worshipped, except ruin and destruction had preceded? for the Devil had corrupted the whole land. We indeed know that all kinds of wickedness then prevailed everywhere, as though the land had been filled with thorns and briers. Jeremiah then could not have planted or sown his heavenly doctrine until the land had been cleansed from so many vices and pollutions. This is no doubt the reason why in the first place he speaks of cutting off and ruin, of exterminating and eradicating, and afterwards adds planting and building.

The heap of words employed shews how deep impiety and the contempt of God had fixed their roots. God might have said only, I have set thee to pull down and to destroy; he might have been content with two words, as in the latter instance — to plant and to build. But as the Jews had been obstinate in their wickedness, as their insolence had been so great, they could not be corrected immediately, nor in one day, nor by a slight effort. Hence God accumulated words, and thus encouraged his Prophet to proceed with unwearied zeal in the work of clearing away the filth which had polluted the whole land. We now then understand what is here said, and the purpose of using so many words. [13]

But he speaks again of kingdoms and nations; for though Jeremiah was given as a Prophet especially to his own nation, yet he was also a Prophet to heathen nations, as they say, by accident, according to what we shall hereafter see: and it seems that, God designedly mentioned nations and kingdoms, in order to humble the pride of that people who thought themselves exempt from all reproof. Hence he says, that he gave authority to his

[13] The whole of this verse is arranged according to the usual manner of the Prophets. The word "nations" comes first, and then "kingdoms." Three lines follow; the first word in each line refers to "kingdoms," and the last to "nations." The {,{ו vau, in the second line is omitted in many copies, and there seems to be no need of it; and it is not true what Blayney says, that there are MSS. which supply the {ו} before the last line, though it be supplied by the Septuagint To preserve the distinct meaning of each verb, I offer the following rendering: --- See, I have set thee this day Over nations and over kingdoms, To root up, and to break down, To destroy, and to erase, To build up, and to plant. He was to root up kingdoms, and to break down nations; then he adds stronger words, for he was to destroy, or wholly to destroy kingdoms, and to erase or to obliterate nations. The reason for the repetition is well stated by Calvin. As to his other work, two words only are used: he was to build up kingdoms, and to plant nations. A nation, of course, exists before a kingdom, and this order is observed in the second line; but the order, as it is usual with the sacred writers, not only of the Old, but also of the New Testament, is then reversed. See an instance in Romans 10:9, 10, where indeed the true order is given last, the ostensible act being in the first instance stated, and then the principle from which it proceeds. --- Ed.}

servant, not only over Judea, but also over the whole world; as though he had said, "Ye are but a small portion of mankind; raise not then your horns against my servant, as ye shall do this without effect; for he shall exercise power not only over Judea, but also over all nations, and even over kings, as the doctrine which I have deposited with him is of such force and power that it will stand eminent above all mortals, much more above one single nation."

We at the same time see that though the treachery of men constrains God to use severity, yet he never forgets his own nature, and kindly invites to repentance those who are not wholly past remedy, and offers to them the hope of pardon and of salvation; and this is what celestial truth ever includes. For though it be the odour of death unto death to those who perish, it is yet the odor of life unto life to the elect of God. It indeed often happens that the greater part turn the doctrine of salvation to their ruin; yet God never suffers all to perish. He therefore makes the truth the incorruptible seed of life to his elect, and builds them up as his temples. This is what we must bear in mind. And so there is no reason why the truth of God should be disliked by us, though it be the occasion of perdition to many; for it always brings salvation to the elect: it so plants them, that they strike roots into the hope of a blessed immortality, and then it builds them for holy temples unto God. It now follows —

Jeremiah 1:11-12

11. Moreover, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree.

11. Et (hoc est, postea) factus est sermo Jehovae ad me (datus est mihi, fuit, ad verbum,) dicendo, Quid tu vides, Jeremia? Et dixi, Baculum vigilis (aut, amigdali) ego video.

12. Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it.

12. Et dixit Jehova ad me, Bene fecisti ad videndam (hoc est, recte vidisti,) quia vigilo (aut, festino, vigilans ego, ad verbum) super sermonem meum ut ipsum faciam (hoc est, ut compleam.)

God confirms in this passage what he had previously said of the power of his word. These two verses, then, are to be taken as explanatory, for no new subject is introduced; but the former part is confirmed — that the Prophets spoke not in vain, or to no purpose, because they were invested with celestial power to plant and to build, and, on the other hand, to pull down and to root up, according to what we have quoted from Paul, who says that true teachers are armed with such power. (2 Corinthians 10:5, 6) We have in readiness, he says, vengeance against all the unbelieving, however proud they may be: and though their height may terrify the whole world, yet we have a sword in our hands which will stay them; for God's word has sufficient power to destroy the rebellious.

God then proceeds with the same subject when he says, *What seest thou, Jeremiah?* He had set before him a staff or a rod of almond, as some render

the word: and {שקר}, *shaked,* means an almond; but as it comes from a verb which means to watch or to hasten, we cannot fitly render it here, almond. I do not, however, deny that the Hebrew word has this meaning. But it is written here with *Kamets;* the participle which afterwards follows has *Holem:* we hence see what affinity there is between the two words. The word {שקר}, *shaked,* an almond, is derived from the verb, {שקר}, *shakad,* to watch; and it has been thought that this tree is so called, because it brings forth fruit earlier than other trees; for almonds, as it is well known, flower even in winter, and in the coldest seasons. Now, were we to say in Latin, I see a rod or a staff of almond; and were the answer given, Thou hast rightly seen, for I watch, the allusion in the words would not appear, the sentence would lose its beauty, and there would indeed be no meaning. It is hence necessary to give another version, except we wish to pervert the passage, and to involve the Prophet's meaning in darkness. It should be, "I see the rod, "or the staff, "of a watcher." Let us grant that the almond is intended; yet the tree may be called watchful, according to what etymology requires, and also the sense of the passage, as all must see. [14]

God then caused his servant to see the staff of a watcher. For what purpose? The answer is given: *Thou hast rightly seen the staff of a watcher, because I watch over my word to execute* (or, fulfill) *it* Interpreters seem to have unwisely confined this to the punishments afterwards mentioned: they think that what is intimated is, that the threatenings which the Prophet announced would not be without effect, because God was prepared to inflict whatever he would denounce. But this, as I think, is too restricted a view; for God, I have no doubt, extols here his own word, and speaks of its accomplishment; as though he had said, that he spoke not by his servants, that what they said might vanish into air, or fall to the ground, but that power would accompany it, according to what is said in Isaiah,

"Not return shall my word to me empty, but shall prosper in all things," (Isaiah 55:11)

that is, "I will cause the prophetic doctrine to take effect, that the whole world may know that I have not spoken in vain, and that my word is not an empty sound, but that it has real power, which in due time will appear."

Hence I have said that these verses ought to be connected with the last, in which God said, that he sent his Prophet to root up and to plant, to demolish and to build. He then gives a proof of this in other words, and says that he would *watch over his word,* that he might execute whatever he

[14] The word is rendered "a rod of almond" by the Septuagint, the Arabic version, and Theodotion; and also by Piscator, Drusius, Grotius, and Blayney; and "the rod of the watcher" by Sym., Aq., and the Vulgate The latter is no doubt more suitable in a translation. Some conclude, from what is related in Numbers 17, that the head of each tribe carried a wand or a staff made of the almond tree as a token of watchfulness: if so, the probability is, that this wand was presented to the view of the Prophet. It being a well-known emblem of watchfulness, and called perhaps the watchful rod or staff, it was most suitable to the purposes here designed. The verb {שקד does not mean to hasten, but to watch, or to be awake. Then the version of the passage would be the following: - 11. And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, ``What seest thou, Jeremiah?'' and I said, ``The rod of a watcher is what I see.'' 12. Then Jehovah said to me, ``Thou seest rightly, for I am watching over my word to do it.'' --- Ed.

had announced by his servants; as though he had said, "I indeed allot their parts (so to speak) to the prophets; but as they speak from my mouth, I am present with them to fulfill whatever I command them." In short, God intimates that the might and the power of his hand would be connected with the word, of which the prophets were ministers among men. Thus it is a general declaration which refers not only to punishments, but also to promises. *Rightly,* then, *hast thou seen,* he says; *for I am watching.*

God does not here resign his own office to Jeremiah, though he employs him as his teacher; for he shews that the power to accomplish what the Prophet would declare remained with him. God indeed does not here ascribe to Jeremiah anything as his own, or apart from himself, but sets forth only the power of his word; as though he had said, "Provided thou be my faithful minister, I will not frustrate thy hope, nor the hope of those who shall obey thee; for I will fulfill whatever thou and they may justly hope for: nor shall they escape unpunished who shall resist thee; for I will in due time bring on them the punishment they deserve."

He therefore uses the word to *watch,* or to hasten, in order to shew that he stood ready to give effect to his word at the appointed time. The effect does not indeed always appear to us: it is on this account said by Habakkuk, that if prophecy delays, we are to wait;

"for it will not be," he says,
"beyond its time; but coming it will come." (Habakkuk. 2:3)

God then bids us with quiet minds to wait for the accomplishment of his word; but he afterwards adds, in order to modify what he had said, "coming it will come;" that is, "I will accomplish and really perform whatever my prophets have spoken by my command." So there shall be no delay, for the suitable time depends on God's will, and not on the judgment of men. It then follows, — but as the clock strikes, I cannot proceed farther today.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou art pleased kindly to invite us to thyself, and hast consecrated thy word for our salvation, — O grant that we may willingly, and from the heart, obey thee, and become so teachable, that what thou hast designed for our salvation may not turn to our perdition; but may that incorruptible seed by which thou dost regenerate us into a hope of the celestial life so drive its roots into our hearts, and bring forth fruit, that thy name may be glorified; and may we be so planted in the courts of thine house, that we may grow and flourish, and that fruit may appear through the whole course of our life, until we shall at length enjoy that blessed life which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. — Amen.

Lecture Third

Jeremiah 1:13-14

13. And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof is toward the north.

13. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad me secundo, dicendo, Quid tu rides? Et dixi, Ollam ferventem ego video, facies ejus a facie Aquilonis.

14. Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.

14. Et dixit Jehova ad me, Ab Aquilone aperietur (alii vertunt, pendetur; alii, solvetur; erumpet, proprie) malum super cunctos habitatores terrae.

Jeremiah begins now to address the people to whom he was sent as a Prophet. He has hitherto spoken of his calling, that the authority of his doctrine might be evident: and he spoke generally; but now he accommodates his teaching specially to the people. Hence he says, that he had a vision, and saw a *boiling-pot,* whose face *was towards the north.* By God asking, and the Prophet answering, the design was to confirm the prediction; for if it had been only said that he saw a boiling-pot, and if an explanation of the metaphor had been given, there would not have been so much force and weight in the narrative. But when God is set forth as being present, and explaining what the boiling-pot signified, the prediction becomes more certain: and the Prophet no doubt gave this narrative, in order to shew that God, being as it were present, thereby proved himself to he the Author of this prophecy.

Now the import of the whole is, that the Chaldeans would come to overthrow the city Jerusalem, to take away and abolish all the honor and dignity both of the kingdom and of the priesthood.

This indeed had been previously announced by Isaiah as well as by other prophets; but all their threatenings had been despised. While indeed Isaiah was living, the king of Babylon had secured the friendship of Hezekiah; and the Jews thought that his protection had been opportunely obtained against the Assyrians. But they did not consider that the hearts of men are ruled by the hand of God, and are turned as he pleases: nor did they consider that they had for many years provoked God, and that he was become their enemy. Since, then, all threatening had been despised and regarded with derision, Jeremiah came forth and declared, that the northern nations would come, the Assyrians as well as the Chaldeans. For we know that the one monarchy had been swallowed up by the other; and the Chaldeans ruled over the Assyrians; and thus it happened that the whole eastern empire, with the exception of the Medes and Persians, had passed over to them; and with respect to Judea, they were northward. Hence the Prophet says, that he saw a *boiling-pot,* having its face towards the north.

By *the pot* many understand the king of Babylon; but they seem not rightly to understand what the Prophet says: and I could easily disprove their interpretation, but I shall be satisfied with a simple statement of what is true; and the meaning will become evident as we proceed. The pot, then, as it will be presently seen more clearly, is the nation of the Jews: I say this now, as I do not wish to heap together too many things. They are said to be like a boiling-pot, because the Lord, as it were, boiled them, until they

were reduced almost to nothing. It is said also, that the face of the pot was towards the north; because there, as Jeremiah immediately explains, was the fire kindled. And the comparison is very apposite; for when a pot is set on the fire, it boils on that side nearest the fire, and all the scum passes over to the other side. Hence he says that it boiled, but so that its mouth was on the north side; for there was the fire, and there was the blowing. In short, God intended to shew to his Prophet, that the people were like flesh which is cast into the pot, boiled, and afterwards burnt, or reduced after a long time almost to nothing. The Prophet saw the mouth or the face of the boiling-pot, and on the side on which it boiled it looked towards the north; hence God, the interpreter of the vision which he presented to his servant, answers and says, *From the north shall break forth evil on all the inhabitants of the land,* that is, of Judea. In these words God declares, that the fire was already kindled by the Chaldeans and the Assyrians, by which he would boil, as it were, his people like flesh, and at length wholly consume them, as it is commonly the case, when the flesh remains in the pot, and the fire is continually burning, and blowing is also added; the flesh must necessarily be reduced to nothing when thus boiled or seethed. [15]

And thus God testifies that the fire was already kindled in Chaldea and Assyria, which was not only to boil the Jews, but also reduce them to nothing. And then he expresses the same in other words — that *evil would come from the north* upon all the Jews. We shall hereafter see that there is presented here a brief summary of the truth which was committed to Jeremiah; at least it is a summary of one half of it; for God designed also to provide for his own elect; and he thus terrified them, that they might be subdued, and submit to him, and not that they might abandon themselves to despair. At the same time, this half of the prediction was — that there was no hope of pardon, because the Jews had with extreme obstinacy provoked God's wrath, and had so abused his patience, that their impiety could no longer be tolerated. Hence, what other prophets had denounced Jeremiah now confirms more strongly, and points it out, as it were, by the finger. It afterwards follows —

Jeremiah 1:15

15. For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne

[15] Most agree with Calvin, that the pot means the Jewish nation; so the learned Gataker in the Ass. Ann., Grotius, Henry, and Scott. There is some difference as to "its face." The first of these authors, followed by the two last, thinks that the face means the front of the fire or the hearth, and therefore the front of the pot. This face or front was towards the north, signifying that the fuel and the blowing would be from that quarter, as it is afterwards stated. As to the metaphor, the pot, or cauldron, see Ezekiel 11:3, 7; 24:3, 5. The version of the Geneva Bible is, "I see a seething-pot looking out of the north;" and the Chaldean army is regarded as the pot: and Blayney, following the marginal reading of our version, has given a similar rendering, "and the face thereof is turned from the north." But {{פנין is a preposition, and rendered often, ``from before,'' and, ``before,'' (see note on verse 8;) and to say that its face was before the north means the same as towards the north: and this is the rendering of Jun. and Trem , and Piscator, ``versus Aquilonem.'' ``The boiling-pot'' is a pot ``kindled under-{ὑποκαιόμενον},'' by the Sept The literal rendering of {סיר} {נפוח} is, ``a pot blown,`` meaning the fire under it. It was a pot set on a fire that was blown, and the front of it was toward the north, from whence the blowing came. The same word as a noun is used by Jeremiah in Jeremiah 6:29, and signifies an instrument for blowing, and is rendered ``bellows'' in our version. It was then a pot set on a fire that was blown, which intimated the severe calamities which the Jews were soon to endure, as Grotius observes. --- Ed.

at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah.

15. Quoniam ecce ego voco omnes familias regnorum Aquilonis, dicit Jehova, et venient; ponent quisque solium suum in ostio postarum Jerosolymae, et super omnes muros ejus in circuitu, et super omnes urbes Jehudah.

This verse contains an explanation of the last; for God more dearly and more specifically expresses what he had before referred to — that the evil would come from the north. He says that he would be the sender of this evil, and speaks thus of it: *Behold, I call all the families of the kingdoms of the north* The prediction would not have been so effectual had not this declaration been expressly added — that the Chaldeans would come by the authority of God; for men are ever wont to ascribe to fortune whatever takes place: and we shall hereafter see in the Book of Lamentations (Lamentations 3:37, 38) that the Jews were so besotted, that in their calamities they attributed to the events of fortune the destruction of the temple and city, and the ruin of the kingdom. Hence God sharply expostulated with them, because they were so blind in a matter so clear, and did not acknowledge his judgments. The Prophet, then, after having testified that the evil would come from the north, now adds, that this evil would by no means be by chance, but through that war which the Chaldeans would bring on them; that God would be the chief commander, who would gather soldiers from all parts, and prepare an army to destroy the Jews.

The Prophet uses the word, to cry: *Behold,* he says, *I will cry* to all the kindreds, or families, etc. [16] God employs various modes of speaking, when he intends to teach us that all nations are in his hand, and subject to his will, so that he can excite wars whenever it pleases him. He says, "Behold, I will hiss (or whistle) for the Egyptians;" and he compares them sometimes to bees. (Isaiah 5:26; Isaiah 7:18.) Again, in another place he says, "Behold, I will blow with the trumpet, and assemble shall the Assyrians." All these modes of speaking are intended to shew, that though men make a great stir, and disturb the whole world, yet God directs all things by his sovereign power, and that nothing takes place except under his guidance and authority. We then see that the Prophet does not speak as an historian; nor does he simply predict what was to be, but also adds a doctrine or a great truth. It would have been a naked prediction only, had he said, "An evil shall break forth from the north: "but he now, as I have already said, performs the office of a teacher, that his prediction might be useful, and says that God would be the chief commander in that war: *Behold,* then, *I will cry to all the families* [17] *of the kingdoms of the north.*

There was then indeed but one monarchy; but as the self — confidence of

[16] Perhaps the more literal rendering would be, "I will call to," or for. The version of Septuagint is, "{συγκάλω}-I will summon;" of Vatablus, ``invitabo --- I will invite;" of Piscator, ``vocabo --- I will call;" and of Blayney, ``I will call for." --- Ed

[17] They are called "families," say some, because kings are called fathers; but probable it is a mode of speaking retained from primitive times, as we find that those called "families" in Genesis 12:3, are called "nations" in Genesis 22:18. — Ed.

the Jews was so great, and hence their sottishness, so that they dreaded no evil, God, in order to arouse them, says that he would assemble all the families of the kingdoms: and doubtless those belonged to many kingdoms whom God brought together against the Jews. A regard also was had to that vain confidence which the Jews entertained, in thinking that the Egyptians would be ever ready to supply them with help. As, then, they were wont to set up the Egyptians as their shield, or even as a mountain, God here exposes their folly, — that trusting in the Egyptians, they thought themselves sufficiently fortified against the power and arms of the whole Chaldean monarchy. For these reasons, then, he mentions the *families,* and then the *kingdoms,* of the north.

It follows, *And they shall come,* and *set each* (man, literally) *his throne* [18] *at the entrance of the gates* The Prophet here means that the power of the Chaldeans would be such, that they would boldly pitch their tents before the gates, and not only so, but would also close up the smaller gates, for he mentions *the doors* (*ostia*) *of the gates* [19] And by speaking of each of them, he meant the more sharply to touch the Jews: for they, relying on the help of Egypt, thought themselves capable of resisting, while yet the Chaldeans, who had conquered the Assyrians, would be irresistible. Hence he says, that not only the army itself would encamp before the gates, but that each individual would fix himself there, and set up his tent as in a place of safety. In short, God intimates that the Chaldeans and Assyrians would be victorious, that they would entirely rule and rest themselves as at their own homes, in the fields and before the gates of the city Jerusalem. These things are afterwards more distinctly expressed, and many circumstances are added: but God intended at first to announce this declaration, that the Jews might know that it would be all over with them.

He then says, *On its walls around, and on all the cities of Judah* The Prophet here declares, that the whole country would be laid waste, as though he had said, "The Jews in vain trust to their own resources, and help from others, for God will fight against them; and as the Chaldeans and the Assyrians shall be armed by him, they shall be victorious, whatever force the Jews may oppose to them." It follows —

Jeremiah 1:16

16. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burnt incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.

[18] The original word, {,כסא not only means a throne, but a seat; see 1 Samuel 1:9; 1 Samuel 4:18; and 2 Kings 4:10, where it is rendered in our version ``a stool.'' Grotius renders it here ``praetorium castrense --- a camp's tent.'' The ``throne'' is derived from the Septuagint. --- Ed

[19] Literally it is "The opening of the gates." The preposition at is not in the original; and the word in some other places is found without it. See Genesis 19:11; Genesis 43:17. The preposition {ἐπὶ} is given by the Septuagint, ``{ἐπὶ} {τὰ} {πρόθυρα}-at or in the vestibules,`` etc. We have the fulfillment of this expressly recorded in Jeremiah 39:3. The idea suggested by Adam Clarke, that they would sit as judges in the gates, as these were the courts of justice, is evidently not intended here; for they would also fix their tents or their seats by or on the walls, and in all the cities of Judah. The latter portion of the verse may be thus rendered, --- And they shall come, and set, each his seat, At the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, And on all its walls around, And on all the cities of Judah. The description betokens an entire possession of the whole land. --- Ed.

16. Et loquar (vel, proferam) judicia mea cum ipsis super omni malitia eorum; quia (nam {אשר} hic ponitur vice {כי} valet causalem particulam, quia) dereliquerunt me, et suffitum fecerunt diis alienis et prostrati fuerunt (vel, se prostraverunt) coram operibus manuum suarum.

God now assigns the reason why he had resolved to deal so severely with the Jews. It was necessary to teach them two things, — first, that the Chaldeans would not of themselves come upon them, but through God, who would gather and arm them; and secondly, that God Would not act in a cruel manner, nor forget his covenant, in becoming a rigid avenger, but that he would thus be angry, because there was extreme iniquity in the Jews, so that it was needful to distress and wholly to break them down, as moderate corrections had availed nothing. God, then, after having testified that he would be the leader in that war, now explains the reasons why he would chastise the Jews, and shews that his conduct towards them could not be ascribed to cruelty, inasmuch as that they had provoked him by their impious superstitions.

Hence he says, *I will speak my judgments with them* This is referred by many interpreters to the Chaldeans and Assyrians, as though God would prescribe to them what was to be decreed, as chief judges are wont to do to those who are under them: but this exposition is strained, and confuted by what follows, *on account of their wickedness* What, then, is to speak judgments? It is done, when God summons the wicked before his tribunal, and executes the office of a judge. And this mode of speaking is common in Scripture, according to what we read at the end of this book, — The king of Babylon *spoke judgments with* the King Zedekiah, (Jeremiah 52:9) that is, he dealt judicially with him, as we commonly say. [20] So now God declares that he would be the judge of the people, as though he had said, that hitherto he had been silent, not that the sins of the people were not known, but because he had borne with them, in order to try whether there was any hope of repentance. But he says now that he would become their judge, as he had found by long experience that they were past remedy.

There is, then, to be understood a contrast between the forbearance of God, which he had long exercised while he dealt with the people, not as he might have justly done, but deferred his vengeance, and the time of vengeance which was now at hand; *I will* then *speak my judgments* with the

[20] The idea conveyed by the Septuagint is somewhat different, and I believe that it is what the original words mean, "{λαλήσω} {πρὸς} {αὐτοὺς} {μετὰ} {κρίσεως} --- I will speak to them with judgment.'' The original literally is, ``and I will speak my judgments to them;'' that is, I will not speak words but judgments: or, I will not address them with words, but with actual judgments. Then in the following words the reason is assigned. The verse may be thus rendered, --- 16. And I will speak by my judgments to them, On account of all their wickedness, Because they have forsaken me, And have burnt incense to strange gods, And have bowed down to the work of their own hands. It is better to retain the outward act as expressed by the last verb, ``bowed down.'' or, more literally, ``bowed down themselves,`` as the verb is in the reflective mood, than to adopt the abstract term ``worshipped.'' So the verb is rendered in the second commandment, Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 5:9. The first, line is rendered by Grotius, ``Proedicam illis decreta mea --- I will declare to them my decrees, ``that is, by Jeremiah and others, --- by Jun. and Trem., ``I will speak my judgments against them,'' that is, by the prophets, --- by Henry. ``I will pass sentence upon them,'' --- by Blayney, ``I will pronounce my judgments against them;'' and Scott gives the same view. But Gataker says, ``It seems rather to import an efficacious and actual decree that God would, in his own appointed time, pass upon them, and put in execution by the Chaldeans.'' Hence he renders the phrase like Henry, ``I will pass sentence,`` or, ``give judgment, upon them.'' --- Ed.

Jews; that is, "I will now ascend my tribunal: I have hitherto abstained from exercising my right, and waited for them to return to me; but as there is no return, and I see that they are men wholly irreclaimable, and their disposition is so depraved that they continually add evils to evils, I will now begin to undertake mine office, the office of a judge." But we must bear in mind, as I have already said, the design of God in this declaration; for it was his object to clear himself from every charge, and from all calumnies, inasmuch as even the worst of men usually clamor against his judgments when he chastises them. Hence he presented before them his own judgments, as though he had said, "They shall not be able to blame me for dealing with them in a severe and cruel manner; for however severe I may be, I shall yet be an equitable judge." Hence he adds, *on account of all their wickedness*

He afterwards shews what kind of wickedness it was, *They have forsaken me*, and *burnt incense to strange gods* The Jews had, indeed, in various ways, provoked his vengeance; but he mentions here one kind of wickedness, because it was the very fountain of evils, — they had departed from the law and the pure worship of God; and yet he mentions generally *all wickedness* The word *all* is not here without meaning, "on *account* of *all* their wickedness:" for he intimates that they were not only in one way wicked, but that they had heaped together various sins. And then he adds, for *they have forsaken me* Here God introduces their defection; for it may be, as we daily see, that one offends in this thing, and another in that, and each one for different causes may expose himself to God's judgment; but God shews here that the Jews were become so depraved, that there was nothing sound or pure in them: hence he charges them with *all wickedness;* and then he mentions their defection, *they have forsaken me;* as though he had said, "They have wholly denied me; I say not that one is a thief, another an adulterer, and another a drunkard; but they are all become apostates, they are all perjurers and violators of the covenant: thus I am wholly forsaken by them, and they are in every respect alienated from me." We hence see how greatly the Prophet enhances the guilt of his own nation.

It is afterwards added, for the sake of illustration, that they *burnt incense to strange gods* They had fallen away from God, and joined themselves to idolatry. He also adds this, — that they *bowed down before the works of their own hands* The Prophet divests the Jews of every excuse, and more fully discovers their shame and baseness, — "they prostrated themselves before the works of their own hands." Whenever Scripture uses these expressions, it intimates that there is extreme madness in those men, who worship in the place of God not only the sun and moon, and other created things, but also the idols which they form for themselves. For how is it that they worship their own idols, except that they have formed for them a nose, and hands, and ears? A log of wood no one worships; a piece of brass or of silver all disregard; no one thinks a stone to be God: but when a thing is sculptured and artificially formed by the hand of man, miserable and blind

idolaters immediately prostrate themselves; — how is this? Because they have formed for their statues and pictures noses, eyes, and ears! hence they themselves have made gods. We now see the meaning of the Prophet, when he says, that the Jews *bowed down before the works of their own hands* But I pass over such things as these lightly, as ye must be well informed on the subject generally. It now follows —

Jeremiah 1:17

17. Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.

17. Et tu accinge lumbos tuos et surge, et loquere ad ipsos quaecunque (vel, omnia quae) ego mandavero tibi; ne timeas a facie ipsorum, ne to conteram (vel, timere faciam) a facie ipsorum (est enim verbum sumptum ex eadem radice.)

God first bids his Prophet to be the herald of the dreadful judgment, which we have already noticed: for it was not his purpose to speak only as it were in a corner, or secretly, to Jeremiah, but he committed to him what he intended should be proclaimed audibly to the whole people. It hence follows, *And thou,* etc. We therefore see that the Prophet had been taught by the Lord, that he might confidently and boldly declare what we shall hereafter see. These things should then be connected, — that God would ascend his tribunal to execute the vengeance he had deferred, — and also that Jeremiah would be the herald of that vengeance he was prepared to inflict. *Thou then,* — an illative is to be added here, for the copulative is to be thus taken in this place, — *Thou then;* that is, as thou hast heard that I shall be now the avenger of the people's sins, and that the time of vengeance is at hand; and also as thou knowest that this has been told thee, that thou mightest warn them to render them more inexcusable, — *Thou* then, [21] *gird thy loins* We see why God addressed his servant Jeremiah privately; it was, that he might publicly exercise his office as a teacher.

And hence we learn, that all who are called to rule the Church of God cannot be exempt from blame, unless they honestly and boldly proclaim what has been committed to them. Hence Paul says that he was free from the blood of all men, because he had from house to house and publicly declared whatever he had received from the Lord, (Acts 20:26, 27;) and he says in another place,

"Woe is to me if I preach not the Gospel,
for it has been committed to me." (1 Corinthians 9:16)

God bids the Prophet to *gird his loins* This is to be understood of the kind of dress which the Orientals used and continue to use, for they wear long garments; and when they undertake any work, or when they proceed

[21] This is correctly given, only the {{ need not be rendered ``then'' or ``therefore.'' It is an instance of the nominative absolute, or of the anticipative case, - And thou, gird thy loins, And arise, and speak to them All that I shall command thee. ``And as for thee,'' by Blayney, is very tame and prosaic. The version of the Geneva Bible is, ``Thou, therefore, trusse up thy loyns.'' --- Ed.

on a journey, they gird themselves. Hence he says, *gird thy loins,* that is, undertake this expetition which I devolve on thee. At the same time he requires activity, so that the work might be expeditiously undertaken. *Arise,* he says, *and speak to them whatsoever I shall command thee* In short, God intimates in these words, that he was unwilling to proceed to extremes, until he had still tried whether there was any hope of repentance as to the people. He indeed knew that they were wholly irreclaimable; but he intended to discover more fully their perverseness in bidding Jeremiah, in the last place, to pronounce the extreme sentence of condemnation.

He now again repeats what he had before said, *Fear not their face* And this exhortation was very needful, as Jeremiah undertook an office in no small degree disliked; for it was the same as though he was an herald, to proclaim war in the name of God. As, then, Jeremiah had distinctly to declare that it was all over with the people, because their perverseness had been so great that God would no longer be entreated, it was a very hard message, not likely to be attended to, especially when we consider what great pride the Jews had. They gloried in their holy descent, and also thought, as we shall hereafter see, that the Temple was an impregnable fortress even against God himself. Since, then, their temper was so refractory, it was needful that the Prophet should be more than once confirmed by God, so that he might boldly undertake his office. The exhortation is, therefore, repeated, *Fear not before them.*

He afterwards adds, *lest I make thee to fear* But the word {חת}, *chet,* means sometimes to fear, and sometimes to break in pieces. Jerome perverts the meaning of the Prophet, by rendering the phrase, "I shall never make thee to fear." It is indeed a godly truth, that God would give courage to his Prophet so as to render him invincible against his enemies; and doubtless he would exhort us in vain, were he not to supply us with fortitude by his Spirit. This is, indeed, true; but the word {פן}, *pen,* will not allow us thus to explain the passage. What then does God mean? We must either render the verb to break or to fear. The verb {אחתך} *achetak,* is transitive; and either meaning would be suitable. For God, after having bidden the Prophet to be of a courageous and invincible mind, now adds,

"Take heed to thyself; for if thou be timid, I will cause thee really to fear, or, I will break thee down before them."

He then intimates, in these words, that the Prophet ought to be sufficiently fortified, as he knew that he was sent by God, and thus acted as it were under the authority of the highest power, and that he should not fear any mortal man. [22] There is also to be understood here a threatening, "See,

[22] It is true that the primary meaning of the verb here used is, to be broken, or to be broken down, to be broken in pieces. It is applied to the breaking of a bow, and to the breaking down of images, 1 Samuel 2:4; Jeremiah 50:2; and to the breaking down of nations, (Isaiah 8:3; Isaiah 30:31.) Such is its meaning when applied to what is material and visible; but when applied to the mind or spirit, it means to be dispirited, daunted, terrified, or dismayed, 2 Kings 19:26; Jeremiah 8:9. It is here first in a passive sense, and then in Hiphil, as in Job 31:34; and in Jeremiah 49:37, — Be not dismayed at them, Lest I cause thee to be dismayed before them.

if thou conductest thyself courageously I shall be present with thee, and however formidable at the first view thy opponents may be, they shall not yet prevail; but if thou be timid and faint — hearted, [23] I will render thee an object of contempt: thou shalt not only be timid in heart; but I will make thee to be despised by all, so that thou shalt be contemptuously treated; for in that case thou wilt not be worthy that I should fight for thee and supply thee with any courage and power to put thine enemies to flight."

We hence see what this means, *Fear not, lest I should make thee to fear;* that is, "Be of a good courage and of a ready mind, lest thou be justly exposed to shame; and fear them not, lest thou shouldest really fear them, and lest they should even tear thee to pieces and tread thee under their feet: for in case thou fearest them, thou wilt be unworthy of being supported by the strength of my Spirit."

This passage contains a useful doctrine, from which we learn that strength shall never be wanting to God's servants, while they derive courage from the conviction that God himself is the author of their calling and become thus magnanimous; for God will then supply them with strength and courage invincible, so as to render them formidable to the whole world: but if they be unhinged and timid, and turn here and there, and be influenced by the fear of men, God will render them base and contemptible, and make them to tremble at the least breath of air, and they shall be wholly broken down; — and why? because they are unworthy that God should help them, that he should stretch forth his hand and fortify them by his power, and supply them, as it has been already said, with that fortitude, by which they might terrify both the Devil and the whole world.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast been once pleased to fortify thy servant Jeremiah with the invincible power of thy Spirit, — O grant that his doctrine may at this day make us humble, and that we may learn willingly to submit to thee, and so to receive and even cordially to accept what thou offerest to us by thy servant — to sustain us by thine hand, and that we, relying on thy power and protection, may fight against the world and against Satan, while each of us, in his vocation, so recumbs on thy power, as not to hesitate, whenever necessary, to expose our very life to dangers: and may we manfully fight and persevere in our warfare to the end, until having finished our course we shall at length come to that blessed rest which is reserved for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. — Amen.

Lecture Fourth

or, Be not terrified by them, Lest I terrify thee before them. Blayney gives to the verb first its secondary meaning, and then its primary, "Be not thou afraid of them, lest I should suffer thee to be crushed before them." How crushed before them? By whom? And to say that there is no threat included in the last line is singular, as words could hardly be framed to express it more distinctly. The Targum expresses the meaning of the first line, "Restrain not thyself from rebuking them." Grotius renders the last line, "Ne ego to perterrefaciam coram illis — lest I terrify thee before them;" which seems to be its best rendering. — Ed.

[23] Cotton, the old translator, has rendered it very strikingly, "If thou quailest," expressing the two words in one. — Ed.

Jeremiah 1:18

18. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land.

18. Et ego, [24] ecce posui to hodie in urbem munitionis (vel, munitam) in columnam (vel, fulturam) ferream, et in murum aeneum, super totam terram, contra Reges Jehudah, contra principes ejus, contra sacerdotes ejus, contra populum terrae ipsius.

God supplies here his servant with confidence; for courage was necessary in that state of trembling which we have observed. Jeremiah thought himself unfit to undertake a work so onerous; he had also to do and to contend with refractory men, and not a few in number; for the whole people had already, through their ungodly and wicked obstinacy, hardened themselves in the contempt of God. As, then, there was no more any care for religion, and no regard manifested by the people for heavenly truth, Jeremiah could not, diffident as he was, undertake so heavy a burden, without being supported by the hand of God. For this reason, then, God now declares that he would make him like *a fortified city and an iron pillar* [25] Indeed, the word prop would be more proper; for {עמור} *omud,* comes from the root {עמד}, *omed;* and the Prophet understands by it, not a pillar that is raised and stands by itself, but that which sustains a building or a wall. There is no ambiguity in the meaning; for God means that his servant would be invincible, and that whatever his enemies might devise against him, they would not yet prevail, as we find it said in the next verse.

Now, though this was said formerly to Jeremiah, yet godly teachers may justly apply it to themselves, who are honestly conscious of their Divine call, and are fully persuaded that they do nothing presumptuously, but obey the bidding of God. All, then, who are thus confirmed in their legitimate call from God, can apply to themselves this promise — that they shall be made invincible against all the ungodly.

But the particulars of this passage deserve to be noticed. It might have seemed enough that God called his servant a *fortified city;* but he compares him also to an *iron pillar* or column, and to a *brazen wall* This repetition only confirms what we have explained, — that Jeremiah would be victorious, and that though Satan might rouse many to assail him, yet the issue would be prosperous and joyful, as he would fight under the protection of God.

[24] We find here nearly the same form or mode of speech as at the beginning of the previous verse, “And I, behold I have made thee,” etc.: and Blayney renders it so here, though not in the preceding instance. — Ed.

[25] There is the preposition {{ל before ``city,'' ``pillar,'' and ``wall.'' It is an idiom. The full meaning is, ``I have made thee to be for a fortified city.'' The same idiom exists in Welsh, the preposition yn is used, which implies that the verb to be is understood. But it is not necessary to retain the preposition in a language in which a similar idiom does not exist. The Septuagint render the preposition by ``{ὡς} --- as,'' and Jun and Trem , by ``velut --- as,'' or like. And such a word would be suitable in our language, --- And I, behold I have made thee this day Like a city that is fortified, And like a pillar of iron, And like a wall of brass, With regard to the whole land, To the kings of Judah, to its princes, To its priests, and to the people of the land. ``To'' here means in opposition to-he was to stand opposed to the kings, etc., as a fortified city, etc. ``Wall'' is plural in the received text; but many MSS., the Septuagint, the Syriac, the Targum, and the Vulgate, have it in the singular number, which seems most suitable. --- Ed.

It is at the same time added, *Over the whole land* God doubtless speaks not of the whole world, but of the land of Judah; for Jeremiah was chosen for this purpose, — that he might bestow his labor on the chosen people. It is then said that he would be a conqueror of the whole of Judea. It then follows, *against the kings of Judah* We know, indeed, that there was only one king in Judea; but God encourages his Prophet to be firm and persevering, as though he had said, that the course of his warfare would be long; and he said this, that he might not faint through weariness. The meaning then is, that the Prophet would not have to contend with one king only, but that as soon as one died, another would rise and oppose him; so that he was to know that there would be no hope of rest until that time had passed which God himself had appointed. We indeed know that those who are sincerely disposed to obey, do yet look for some definite period, when, like soldiers who have served their time, they may obtain a discharge; but God declares here to his Prophet, that when he had strenuously contended to the death of one king, his condition would be nothing better; for others would succeed, with whom he would have to fight, as the same wickedness and obstinacy would be still continued. To kings, he adds *princes* and *priests;* and, lastly, the *whole people*

When a king forgets his office and rules tyrannically, it often happens that there are moderators who check his passions, when they cannot wholly restrain them: we indeed see, that the most cruel tyrants are sometimes softened by good counselors. But God here reminds his Prophet that the state of things in Judea would be so desperate, that ungodly and wicked kings would have counselors endued with the same disposition. When *priests* are added, it might seem still more monstrous; but the Scripture everywhere testifies, that the Levitical priests had almost all degenerated and become apostates, so that hardly one in a hundred shewed the least sign of religion. Since, then, that order had become thus corrupt, it is no wonder that Jeremiah had to declare war against the priests; and we shall hereafter see that this was done. Now the common people might have seemed to be excusable, as there was greater simplicity among them than among the higher orders; (for they who are elevated above others transgress through pride or cruelty, and often allow themselves too much liberty, relying on their own eminence; but the common people, as I have said, seemed apparently to have more modesty;) but God here declares that impiety had so greatly prevailed in Judea, that all, from the least to the greatest, were become perversely wicked. It was, therefore, necessary, as I have before stated, that the Prophet should be fully armed; for what could he have thought, had he not in time been warned, on finding afterwards such insolence, yea, such fury in high and low, as to constrain him to contend with God's chosen people no otherwise than with devils? It afterwards follows —

Jeremiah 1:19

19. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against

thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

19. Pugnabunt autem tecum (vel, praeliabuntur contra to,) sed non praevalebunt tibi, quia tecum ego (quia sum tecum,) dicit Jehova, ad to liberandum.

God in this verse briefly reminds his servant, that though he would be supplied with invincible power, yet he would have great trials, so that his office would not be, according to a common saying, a mere play. He then shews for what purpose he would be made like a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a brazen wall, even that he might manfully fight, and not for the purpose of keeping away all dangers, and all fightings, and everything hard and grievous to the flesh. We, in short, see that the promise was given for this end, — that Jeremiah, relying on God's aid, might not hesitate to set himself against all the Jews, and that whatever might be their fury, he might still be courageous.

Now a profitable doctrine may be hence gathered, even this — that whenever God promises his servants victory over their enemies, they ought not to make this the occasion of fostering their torpidity or idleness, but, on the contrary, of gathering courage, so that they may proceed boldly and unweariedly in the course of their vocation. In short, God promises to be their deliverer, but at the same time exhorts them to resist all the assaults of their enemies.

Hence he says, *They shall fight with thee, but they shall not prevail, for I am with thee to deliver thee* [26] From these words we see that Jeremiah was fully armed, that he might not fear on seeing dangers surrounding him; for God does not here declare that he would be like a wall to him to prevent him from being assaulted, but he says that he would deliver him; as though he had said, "Prepare thyself to suffer; for except I were thy deliverer, it would be all over with thee, and thou mightest perish a hundred times; but there is no reason for thee to fear any dangers amidst thousand deaths, since I am present with thee as thy deliverer." Now follows —

[26] It ought to be, "For with thee will I be, to deliver thee;" for the verb to be, being understood, it must be put in the same tense with the other verbs in the passage: and such is the rendering of Blayney. — Ed.

Chapter 2

CHAPTER 2

Jeremiah 2:1-2

1. Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

1. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad me, dicendo,

2. Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.

2. Vade et clama ad aures Jerusalem, dicendo, Sic dicit Jehova, Recordatus sum tui propter misericordiam adolescentiae tuae et dilectionem desponsationis tuae, quum me sequuta es (quum venisti post me, profecta es post me) in deserto, in terra non seminata.

God now mentions to his servant the commands which he was to convey to the king and priests, and to the whole people; for by the *ears of Jerusalem* he means all its inhabitants. God here intimates that the Jews were unworthy of being cared for by him any more; but that he is induced by another reason not to reject them wholly, until he had found out by experience their irreclaimable wickedness. So then he makes this preface, *I remember thee for the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thy espousals* In these words he shews that he regarded not what the Jews deserved, nor acknowledged any worthiness in them, as the reason why he was solicitous for their salvation, and endeavored to bring them to the right way by the labors of his Prophet, but that this is to be ascribed to his former benefits.

Some render the words, "I remember the piety or kindness of thy youth;" and {לך} *lak,* may be thus taken, as it is in other places. Others omit this word; while others consider a copulative to be understood, "I remember thee, and the kindness of thy youth." But none, as I think, have attained to the meaning of the Prophet: there is yet no obscurity in the words, if a

preposition be considered as being understood, so as to read thus, — that God remembered his people *for* the kindness which he had shewn to them, and for the love which he had manifested towards them from the beginning. Then the real meaning of the Prophet I think to be this, — that God here takes away every ground for pride and boasting from the Jews; as though he had said, that they were worthy, they had no reason to think; but that he was still their Father, and was therefore unwilling that the benefits he had formerly conferred upon them should be wholly lost. There is, in short, given here a reason why God sent Jeremiah after the other prophets; as though he had said, "It is a testimony to you of the paternal care which I shew to you, when I send my Prophet to give you a hope of pardon, if ye return to the right way and be reconciled to me. But how is it that I still shew a concern for you, as ye have forgotten me, and wholly disregarded my law? It is so, because I wish to continue my favors to you." The *kindness of thy youth* he takes in a passive sense; for he does not mean that the Jews were kind or merciful, but that they had experienced the kindness of God.

But the metaphor here used must be noticed. God compares himself here to a young bridegroom, who marries a youthful bride, in the flower of her age, and in the prime of her beauty: and it is a manner of speaking commonly adopted by the prophets. I will not now detain you with a long explanation, as the subject will be treated more at large in another place.

As God, then, had espoused the people of Israel, when he redeemed and brought them out of Egypt, he says now, that he *remembers* the people on account of that *kindness* and *love*. He sets kindness or beneficence before love. The word {חסר}, *chesad*, properly means a gratuitous favor or kindness, which is shewn to the miserable, or beneficence. By the word love, God means in many other places the gratuitous election with which he had favored the whole people. The expression is indeed made clearer when kindness or gratuitous favor is placed first, and then love is added: though nothing new is added, yet the Prophet more fully shews that the people had been loved by God in no other way than through his kindness. [27]

Now this is a remarkable passage; for God shews that his covenant, though perfidiously violated by the Jews, was yet firm and immutable: for though

[27] Though most of modern commentators, Grotius, Gataker, Blayney, Scott, Adam Clarke, etc., give the same view of this verse with Calvin, yet the probability is, and something more than the probability, that the sense in which it was taken by the ancients is the correct one; which is the sense given in our version, and adopted by Henry. A literal rendering of the verse is sufficient to shew its meaning, — 2. Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, — I remember, with regard to thee, The kindness of thy youth, The love of thy espousals, Thy coming after me in the desert, Through a land not sown. "Thy coming, or, walking after me," stands in the same relation to "remember" as the two preceding words: this is plainly the construction; and this construction determines the meaning of the foregoing lines. Our version is quite wrong in rendering {,{לך ``thee;'' it ought ever to be rendered as above, when the verb, as here, is followed by an accusative case. See Leviticus 26:45; Psalm 79:8; Psalm 106:45 What has led commentators, no doubt, to divert this passage from its right meaning was their impression that more is here ascribed to Israel than their history warrants. But this is not the only instance in which their former conduct is contrasted with their latter conduct. This is done in Malachi 2:5, as to the priests. The object here is to set forth the difference between the people when brought out of Egypt, and following God's guidance in the wilderness, and their conduct at the time of Jeremiah. They were indeed very far from being what they ought to have been in the first instance, but their deportment in Jeremiah's age was incomparably worse. --- Ed.

not all who derive their descent according to the flesh from Abraham, are true and legitimate Israelites, yet God ever remains true, and his calling, as Paul says, is without repentance. (Romans 11:29.) We may therefore learn this from the Prophet's words, — that God was not content with one Prophet, but continued his favor, inasmuch as he would not render void his covenant. The Jews indeed had impiously departed from the covenant, and a vast number had deservedly perished, having been wholly repudiated; yet God designed really to shew that his grace depends not on the inconstancy of men, as Paul says in another place, for it would then presently fail, (Romans 3:4) and that were all men false and perfidious, God would yet remain true and fixed in his purpose. This we learn from the Prophet's words, when it is said, that God remembered the people on account of the kindness of their youth.

As to *youth* and *espousals,* we may hence learn that they had been anticipated by God's kindness; for they became in no other way connected with God than by having been chosen by him: their espousal would not have been enjoyed by the people, had not God anticipated them. What was Abraham? and what were all his posterity? God then now shews, that the beginning of all blessings, and as it were the fountain, was this, — that it pleased him to choose the people for himself.

And the same thing is confirmed in other words: *When,* he says, *thou didst follow me in the desert, in a land not sown* The people, we know, did not obey God as they ought to have done, even when he had redeemed them. Hence God does not so much in this place commend the people for any merits of their own, but especially confirms what I have already stated, — that he could not cast aside every care for a people whom he had once adopted, and whom he had led through the desert, that they might be a people separated from the rest of the world. He however concedes to them, according to his great goodness, the praise of obedience, because they followed God through rough ways, as though a tender young woman refused not to undergo hard and irksome toils from love to her bridegroom. He afterwards adds —

Jeremiah 2:3

3. Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.

3. Sanctitas Israel Jehovae, primitiae frugum ejus; quicunque comederint contrahent noxam (alii vertunt, peccabunt; sed ego potius ad poenam refero,) malun veniet super eos (exegetice additur hoc membrum) dicit Jehova.

God here more clearly reprobates the ingratitude of the people: and first he enumerates his favors by which he had bound the people for ever to himself; and secondly, he shews how malignantly the people responded to the many blessings which they had received.

In saying, then, that Israel was *holy,* he intends it not by way of honor. It was indeed in itself an illustrious testimony to their praise, that God had consecrated that people to himself, that he designed them to be the

first — fruits of his increase: but we must remember that there is here an implied contrast between this great and incomparable favor of God, and the wickedness of the people, who afterwards fell away from that God who had been so liberal and gracious to them. According to this view, then, does Jeremiah say, that *Israel was holiness* to God; that is, that they were separated from all other nations, so that the glory of God shone only among them.

He then adds, that they were the *first-fruits of his produce* For though whatever produce the earth may bring forth ought to be consecrated to God, by whose power it grows, yet we know that the first — fruits were gathered and set on the altar as a sacred food. As, then, God had commanded, under the law, the first-fruits to be offered to him, and then given to the priests, he says here, in accordance with that rite, that Israel were the first — fruits of his produce. For the nations, who then everywhere dwelt, were not removed from under God's government (as he is the creator of all, and shews himself to all as the Father and supporter); but he passed by other nations, and chose the race of Abraham, and for this end, — that he might protect them by his power and aid. Since, then, God had so bound the nation to himself, how great and how strong was the obligation under which that people was to him? Hence the more base and the more detestable was their perfidy, when the people despised the singular favors which God had conferred on them. We now see why the Prophet says that Israel was holy to God, and the first — fruits of his increase.

He also intimates that the time would come, when God would gather to himself other nations; for in the first-fruits the people dedicated and offered to God the whole produce of the year is included. So then Israel was like the first-fruits, because God afterwards took to himself other nations, which for many ages were deemed profane. But yet his special object was to shew that the guilt of the people was extreme, as they did not acknowledge the great favors which God had bestowed on them.

He then adds, *Whosoever will devour him shall be punished* Of this meaning I approve, because the explanation immediately follows, *evil shall come on them* God then means not that they should be only guilty of a crime, who should devour the first-fruits, but refers rather to punishment; as though he had said, "The profane shall not be unpunished who shall devour the first-fruits which has been dedicated to me." For if any had stolen the first- fruits, God would have executed a vengeance such as sacrilege deserved. If, however, any one prefers the other explanation, — that it would be a crime to injure Israel, or to do him any harm, because he was under God's protection, I shall not oppose him: but the wording of the sentence leads me to the other view, that is, that those who would injure Israel would not only be guilty, but would not be able to escape God's vengeance, — and why? because *evil will come upon them, saith Jehovah* [28] He afterwards explains more clearly

[28] Blayney considers this verse as referring to Israel in ancient times, and as spoken by God:

the import of his doctrine —

Jeremiah 2:4-5

4. Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel:

4. Audite sermonem Jehovae domus Jacob, et omnes cognationes (vel, familiae) domus Israel:

5. Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?

5. Sic dicit Jehova, Quid invenerunt patres vestri in me iniquitatis, quia alienati sunt a me, et ambulaverunt (vel, profecti sunt) post vanitatem, et facti sunt evanidi (vel, evanuerunt)?

Here God explains why he had referred to what we have noticed, — that he had consecrated Israel to himself as a peculiar people, and as the first — fruits. God often mentions his favors to us, in order to encourage our hope, that we may be fully persuaded that whatever may happen we are ever safe, because we are under his protection, since he has chosen us. But in this place, and in many other places, God recounts the obligations under which the Israelites were to him, that thence their ingratitude might become more apparent.

Hence he says, *Hear ye the word of Jehovah* By this preface he seeks to gain attention; for he intimates that he was going to address them on no common subject. *Hear ye,* then*, O house of Jacob; hear all ye families of the house of Israel;* as though Jeremiah had said, "Here I come forth boldly in the name of God, for I fear not that any defense can be brought forward by you to disprove the justice of God's reproof; and I confidently wait for what ye may say, for I know you will be silent. I then loudly cry like a trumpet and with a clear voice, that I am come to condemn you; if there is anything which ye can answer, I give you full liberty to do so; but the truth will constrain you to be mute, for your guilt is extremely odious and capable of the fullest proof." Hence it was that he exhorted them to hear attentively.

Then follows the charge: *What, iniquity have your fathers found in me*, that having forsaken *me they should walk after vanity and become vain?* Here Jeremiah charges the people with two crimes, — that they had departed from the true God, whom they had found to be a deliverer, — and that they had become vain in their devices; or, in other words, that they were become for no reason apostates: for their sin was enhanced, because there had been no occasion given them to forsake God, and to alienate themselves from him. As then God had kindly treated them, and they themselves had shaken off the yoke, and as there was no one whom they could compare with God, they

hence he renders the last words, "said Jehovah." The first part seems to declare what Israel was, and the other appears to be the language of God respecting them, — Holy was Israel to Jehovah, The first-fruits of his produce: "All his devourers shall be deemed guilty, Evil shall come to them," said Jehovah. The verb {{אשם is rendered ``{πλημμελήσουσι} --- shall offend,'' by the Septuagint, as in our version, and by Grotius; ``trespass,'' by Gataker; and, ``guilty of a trespass,'' by Blayney. The contradiction of guilt is what is meant, as the punishment is announced in the next words. See Psalm 105:14, 15. --- Ed

could not have said, "We have been *deceived,*" — how so? "*For ye have,* he says, *followed vanity;* and vanity alone was the reason why ye have departed from me." [29] I wish I could proceed farther; but I have some business to which I was called even before the lecture.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou continuest at this day, both morning and evening, to invite us to thyself, and assiduously exhortest us to repent, and testifiest that thou art ready to be reconciled to us, provided we flee to thy mercy, — O grant, that we may not close our ears and reject this thy great kindness, but that remembering thy gratuitous election, the chief of all the favors thou hast been pleased to shew us, we may strive so to devote ourselves to thee, that thy name may be glorified through our whole life: and should it be that we at any time turn aside from thee, may we quickly return to the right way, and become submissive to thy holy admonitions, that it may thus appear that we have been so chosen by thee and called as to desire to continue in the hope of that salvation, to which thou invitest us, and which is prepared for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. — Amen.

Lecture Fifth

WE heard yesterday God's complaint, and his expostulation with his people. He said in short, that if they came before any judge there were reasons sufficient to condemn their ingratitude, and that they were without excuse, because they had gone after vanity and were become vain; or, in other words, that they had without a cause forsaken him, and were carried away only by their own intentions. It now follows —

Jeremiah 2:6-7

6. Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?

6. Et non dixerunt, (hoc est, non cogitarunt apud se,) Ubi est Jehova, qui eduxit nos e terra Egypti, et proficisci fecit nos per desertum in terra solitaria (vel, vasta) et squalida, in terra horribili et umbrae mortis; in terra per quam vir non transtit, et in qua non habitavit homo?

7. And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.

7. Et introduxi vos in terram fertilem, ad comedendos fructus ejus (vel, ad

[29] The literal rendering of this verse is as follows, — 5. Thus saith Jehovah, What have your fathers found in me? Oppression? For they have gone far from me, And have followed after vanity, And have become vain. The word {,{שוא oppression, injustice, or tyranny, is so placed in the sentence that it cannot be construed with ``what.'' The word ``vanity'' means often an idol, and it is so considered here by the Targum, by Piscator, Grotius, Gataker, and others. It is often found in the plural, ``vanities,'' as it is here in the Septuagint; see Deuteronomy 32:21; 1 Kings 16:26; Psalm 31:6: but it is here the poetical singular. They ``became vain,'' that is, foolish, sottish, having no more sense or reason than their idols, as idolaters are represented in Psalm 115:8. Their senselessness is set forth in the next verse. An idol is especially called ``vanity,'' because it can do no good and avails nothing: deluded imagination alone gives it all its efficacy and power. Samuel gives a true account of idols, 1 Samuel 12:21. But as long as the devil deceives and deludes the world, idols and images will be in repute, though they are in themselves wholly useless and worthless, while yet they prove ruinous to the souls of men. --- Ed

comedendum fructum ejus, in singulari,) et ubertatem ejus (ad verbum est, ad bonum ejus;) et ingressi estis et polluistis terram meam, et haereditatem meam posuistis in abominationem.

The Prophet goes on with the same subject; for God adduces here no small crime against his people, as they had buried his favom's in oblivion. Indeed, a redemption so wonderful was worthy of being celebrated in all ages, not only by one nation, but by all the nations of the earth. As then the Jews had thus buried the memory of a favor so remarkable and valuable, their base impiety appeared evident. Had they not experienced the power and kindness of God, or had they only witnessed them in an ordinary way, their guilt might have been extenuated; but as God had from heaven made an unusual display of his power, and as his majesty had been manifested before the eyes of the people, how great was their sottishness in afterwards forgetting their God, who had openly and with such proofs made himself known to them!

We now then understand what the Prophet means by saying, *they have not said:* for God here sharply reproves the stupidity of the Jews, — that they did not consider that they were under perpetual obligations to him for his great kindness in delivering them in a manner so wonderful from the land of Egypt. By saying that they did not say, *Where is Jehovah,* he intimates that he was present with them and nigh them, but that they were blind, and that hence they were without an excuse for their ignorance, as he was not to be sought as one at a distance, or by means tedious and difficult. If then this only had come to their mind, "Did not God once redeem us?" they could not have departed after their vanities. How then was it that their error, or rather their madness, was so great that they followed idols? Even because they did not choose to make any effort, or to apply their minds to seek or to inquire after God.

Here then the Prophet meets the objection of the hypocrites, who might have said, that they had been deceived, and had relapsed through ignorance; for they have ever some evasions ready at hand, when they are called to an account for their sins. But lest the Jews should make any pretense of this kind, the Prophet here shews that they had not been through a mistake deceived, but that they had followed after falsehood through a wicked disposition, for they had willfully despised God and refused to inquire respecting him, though he was sufficiently nigh them.

This passage deserves to be especially noticed; for there is nothing more common than for the ungodly, when they are proved guilty, to have recourse to this subterfuge, — that they acted with good intention, when they gave themselves up to their own superstitions. The Prophet then takes off this mask, and shews that where God is once known, his name and his glory cannot be obliterated, except through the depravity of men, as they knowingly and willfully depart from him. Hence all apostates are by this one clause condemned, that they may no more dare to make evasions, as though they

have been through more simplicity deceived: for when the matter is examined, their malignity and ingratitude are discovered, because they deign not to inquire, *Where is Jehovah?*

And he afterwards adds what explains this sentence. I have said that other nations are not here condemned, but the Jews, who had known by clear experience that God was their father. As then God had, by many testimonies, made himself known to them, they had no pretext for their ignorance. Hence the Prophet says, that they did not consider where God was who *brought them from the land of Egypt, and made them to pass through the desert* He could not have stated this indiscriminately of all nations; but, as it has been said, the words are addressed particularly to the Jews, who had clearly witnessed the power of God; so that they could not have sinned except willfully, even by extinguishing, through their own malignity, the light presented to them, which shone before their eyes. And here, also, the Prophet amplifies their guilt by various circumstances: for he says, not simply that they had been brought out of Egypt, but intimates that God had been their constant guide for forty years; for this time is suggested by the word "desert." The history was well known; hence a brief allusion was sufficient. He, at the same time, by mentioning the desert, greatly extols the glory of God.

But the first thing to be observed is, that the Jews were inexcusable, who had not considered that their fathers had been wonderfully and in an unusual manner preserved by God's hand for forty years; for they had no bread to eat, nor water to drink. God drew water for them from a rock, and satisfied them with heavenly bread; and their garments did not wear out during the whole time. We then see that all those circumstances enhanced their guilt. Then follows what I have referred to: the Prophet calls the desert a dry or a waste land, a *dreary land, a horrible land, a land of deadly gloom,* as though he had said, that the people had been preserved in the midst of death, yea in the midst of many deaths: for *man was not wont to pass through* that land, *nor did any one dwell in it* [30] "Whence then," he says, "did salvation arise to you? from what condition? even from death itself: for what else was the desert but a horrible place, where you were surrounded, not only by one kind of death, but by a hundred? Since then God brought you out of Egypt by his incredible power, and fed you in a supernatural manner for forty years, what excuse can there be for so great a madness in now alienating yourselves

[30] Though the general import of this verse is given, yet the version is not very accurate. I offer the following- And they have not said, "Where is Jehovah, Who brought us up from the land of Egypt, Who led us in the wilderness, Through a land of waste and of the pit, Through a land of drought and of the shadow of death, Through a land in which no man traveled, And no human being dwelt there?" The word "pit" is used poetically, the singular for the plural, and correctly rendered "pits" in our version. It is probably an allusion to the practice of digging pits and covering them over, in order to catch wild beasts; and the word is used here only to express hidden dangers. "The shadow of death" means a barren dreariness. After "land," in the last line but one, {{אשר is supplied by three MSS., and by the Septuagint, though by no means in character with the Greek language; but the idiom of the Hebrew requires it, and is no doubt the true reading. I have rendered {אדם} in the last line, after Blayney, ``human being.'' The five last lines are thus given by the Septuagint, --- Who conducted you in the wilderness, In a land unknown and inaccessible ({ἀβάτῳ}) In a land without water and barren ({ἀκάρπῳ} --- fruitless) In a land through which no man passed, And no son of man inhabited there. The word ``barren'' is rendered more literally by Theodotion, ``{σκιασ} {θανάτου} --- of the shadow of death.'' --- Ed

from him?" Now this passage teaches us, that the more favors God confers on us, the more heinous the guilt if we forsake him, and less excusable will be our wickedness and ingratitude, especially when he has manifested his kindness to us for a long time and in various ways.

He afterwards adds, *And I brought you in, etc.* Here Jeremiah introduces God as the speaker; for God had, as with his hand stretched forth, brought in the children of Abraham into the possession of the promised land, which they did not get, as it is said in Psalm 44:3, by their own power and by their own sword; for though they had to fight with many enemies, yet it was God that made them victorious. He could then truly say, that they did not otherwise enter the land than under his guidance; inasmuch as he had opened a way and passage for them, and subdued and put to flight their enemies, that they might possess the heritage promised to them. *I brought you in,* he says, into the land, *into Carmel* Some consider this to be the name of a place; and no doubt there was the mount Carmel, so called on account of its great fertility. As then its name was given to it because it was so fertile, it is nothing strange that Jeremiah compares the land of Israel to Carmel. Some will have the preposition כ, *caph,* to be understood, "I have brought you into a land like Carmel." But there is no need laboriously to turn in all directions the Prophet's words. It is, as I think, a common noun, meaning fruitful, and used here to shew that the Israelites had been brought by God's hand into a fertile land; for its fertility is everywhere celebrated, both in the Law and in the Prophets. [31]

That ye might eat its fruit and its abundance; that is, "I wished you to enjoy the large and rich produce of the land." By these words God intimates that the Israelites ought to have been induced by such allurements cordially to serve him; for by such liberal treatment he kindly invited them to himself. The greater, then, the bounty of God towards the people, the greater was the indignity offered by their defection, when they despised the various and abounding blessings of God.

Hence he adds, *And ye have polluted my land,* [32] *and mine heritage have ye made an abomination;* as though he had said, "This is the reward by which my bounty towards you has been compensated. I indeed gave you this land, but on this condition, that ye serve me faithfully in it: but ye have polluted it." He calls it his own land, as though he had said, that he had so given the land to the Israelites, that he remained still the lord of it as a proprietor, though he granted the occupation of it to them. He hence

[31] That the word means a fruitful field or country is evident from Isaiah 10:18; Isaiah 16:10; Jeremiah 4:26, etc. there was also a city bearing this name, situated in the tribe of Judah, Joshua 15:55, and also a mountain belonging to the tribe of Manasseh, Joshua 19:26. — Ed.

[32] "And ye came" is left out. The same verb in a causative sense is used at the beginning of the verse, rendered, "I brought." It would be more striking to retain the same verb, and not to use "but when" in the latter instance, as in our version, — And I caused you to come into a fruitful land, To eat its fruit and its rich produce; And ye came and polluted my land, And made mine heritage an abomination. The whole runs thus much better, and has the conciseness of poetry: and the idea intended to be conveyed is more apparent — God caused them to come, and they came. — Ed.

shews that they impiously abused his bounty, in polluting that land which was sacred to his name. For the same purpose he calls it his *heritage,* as if he said that they possessed the land by an hereditary right, and yet the heritage belonged to their Father. They ought, therefore, to have considered, that they had entered into the land, because it had been given to Abraham and to his children for an heritage, — by whom? By God, who was the fountain of this bounty. The more detestable, then, was their ingratitude, when they *made the heritage* of God *an abomination* It follows —

Jeremiah 2:8

8. The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.

8. Sacerdotes non dixerunt, Ubi Jehova? et qui tenebant (vel, servabant) legem (ad verbum est, apprehendentes, vel, tenentes legem) non cognoverunt me: et pastores perfide egerunt mecum; et prophetae prophetarunt in Baal (hoc est, per Baal,) et post ea qua non prosunt ambulaverunt (vel, profecti sunt).

God assails here especially the teachers and those to whom was committed the power of ruling the people. It often happens that the common people fall away, while yet some integrity remains in the rulers. But God shews here that such was the falling away among the whole community, that priests as well as prophets and all the chief men had departed from the true worship of God, and from all uprightness.

Now, when Jeremiah thus rebukes the teachers and the priests and others, he does not excuse the common people, nor extenuate the crimes, which then prevailed everywhere, as we shall see from what follows. As many think that they set up a shield against God, when they pretend that they are not acquainted with so much learning as to distinguish between light and darkness, but that they are guided by their rulers, the Prophet, therefore, does not here cast the faults of the people upon their rulers, but, on the contrary, he amplifies the atrocity of their impiety, for they had, from the least to the greatest, rejected God and his Law. We now, then, understand the design of the Prophet. [33]

We may learn from this passage how unwise and foolish are they who think that they are in part excusable when they can say, that they have proceeded in their simplicity and have been drawn into error by the faults of others; for it appears evident that the whole community was in a hopeless state when God gave up the priests and rulers unto a reprobate mind; and there is no doubt but that the people had provoked God's vengeance, when

[33] It appears that the Prophet has already condemned the people in the foregoing portion of this chapter. In Jeremiah 1:18, we find the different classes thus arranged — kings and princes, priests, the people of the land. At the beginning of this chapter, he addresses the people-the whole community, and here he names the priests, and the pastors, i.e., in the state, including kings and princes. Thus he reverses the order according to the common usage of Scripture: but to these are added here, prophets, because they were the spiritual pastors, as kings and princes were the civil. — Ed.

every order, civil as well as religious, was thus corrupt. God then visited the people with deserved punishment, when he blinded the priests, the prophets, and the rulers.

Hence Jeremiah now says, that the priests did not inquire *where Jehovah was:* and he adds, *and they who keep the law, etc.* The verb {תפש} *taphesh,* means to keep, to lay hold on, and sometimes to cover; so that there may be here a twofold meaning, — that the priests kept the law, — or, that they had it shut up as it were under their keeping. It would not, however, be in harmony with the passage to suppose that the law was suppressed by them; for God, by way of concession, speaks here honorably of them, thought he thereby shews that they were the more wicked, as they had no care for their office. He says, then, that they were the keepers of his law, not that they really kept the law, as though a genuine zeal for it prevailed among them, but because they professed this. They indeed wished to be thought the keepers of the law, who possessed the hidden treasure of celestial truth; for they wished to be consulted as though they were the organs of God's Spirit. Since, then, they boasted that they kept and preserved the law, the Prophet now more sharply rebukes them, because they knew not God himself. And Paul seems to have taken from this place what he says in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Romans,

"Thou who hast the form of the law — thou who preachest against adultery, committest adultery, and thou who condemnest idols art thyself guilty of sacrilege; for thou keepest the law, restest in it, boastest in God, and with thee is understanding and knowledge."
(Romans 2:20-22.)

Paul in these words detects the wickedness of hypocrites; for the more detestable they were, as they were thus inflated with false glory; they profaned the name of God, while they pretended to be his heralds, and as it were his prophets. We now see that this second clause refers to the priests, and that they are called the keepers of the law, because they were so appointed, according to what we read in Malachi. [34]

He afterwards adds, *The pastors have dealt treacherously with God* We may apply this to the counselors of the king as well as to the governors of cities. The Prophet, I have no doubt, included all those who possessed authority to rule the people of God; for kings and their counselors, as well as prophets, are in common called pastors.

And he says, that the *prophets prophesied by Baal* The name of prophet is sacred; but Jeremiah in this place, as in other places, calls those prophets (contrary to the real fact) who were nothing but impostors; for God had

[34] Perhaps no better word can express the verb here used than that of our versions., "handle" —"they that handle the law," that is explain and teach it. To "handle the harp," is to play on it, Genesis 4:21; to "handle war," is to carry it on, Numbers 31:27; to "handle the oar," is to ply with it, Ezekiel 27:29; and to "handle the bow," is either to use it, or to know how to use it, Amos 2:15. They who handled the law were evidently those who undertook to explain and teach it to others. To lay hold on, seems to be the primary meaning of the verb, and that either for a good or a bad purpose. "The Scribes," observes Scott, "who undertook to expound the Scriptures, did not understand them." — Ed.

taken from them all the light of divine truth. But as they were held still in esteem by the people, as though they were prophets, the Prophet concedes this title to them, derived from their office and vocation. We do the same in the present day; we call those bishops and prelates, and primates and fathers, who under the papacy boast that they possess the pastoral office, and yet we know that some of them are wolves, and some are dumb dogs. We concede to them these titles in which they take pride; and yet a twofold condemnation impends over their heads, as they thus impiously, and with sacrilegious audacity, claim for themselves sacred titles, and deprive God of the honor rightly due to him. So then Jeremiah, speaking of the prophets, does now point out those as impostors who at that time wickedly deceived the people.

He says that they prophesied *by Baal:* they ascribed more authority to idols than to the true God. The name of Baal, we know, was then commonly known. The prophets often call idols Baalim, in the plural number; but when Baal signifies a patron, when the prophets speak either of Baal in the singular number, or of Baalim in the plural, they mean the inferior gods, who had then been heaped together by the Jews, as though God was not content with his own power alone, but had need of associates and helpers, according to what is done at this day by those under the papacy, who confess that there is but one true God; and yet they ascribe nothing more to him than to their own idols which they invent for themselves at their pleasure. The same vice then prevailed among the Jews, and indeed among all heathen nations; for it was the plain and real confession of all, that there is but one supreme Being; and yet they had gods without number, and these all were called Baalim. When, therefore, the Prophet says here, that the teachers were ministers of Baal, he sets this name in opposition to the only true God, as though he had said that the truth was corrupted by them, because they passed over its limits, and did not acquiesce in the pure doctrine of the law, but mingled with it corruptions derived from all quarters, even from those many gods which heathen nations had invented for themselves.

Nor does the Prophet insist on a name; for it may have been that these false teachers pretended to profess the name of the eternal God, though falsely. But God is no sophist: there is then no reason for the Papists to think that they are at this day unlike these ancient impostors, because they profess the name of the only true God. It has always been so. Satan has not begun for the first time at this day to transform himself into an angel of light; but all his teachers in all ages have presented their poison, even all their errors and fallacies, in a golden cup. Though, then, these prophets boasted that they were sent from above, and confidently affirmed that they were the servants of the God of Abraham, it was yet all an empty profession; for they mingled with the truth those corruptions which they had derived from the ungodly errors of heathen nations.

It follows, *And after those who do not profit have they gone* [35] He again, by an implied comparison, exaggerates their sin, because they had despised him whom they had known, by so many evidences, to be their Father and the author of salvation, whose infinite power they had as it were felt by their own hands, and then they followed their own inventions, though there was nothing in all their idols which could have justly allured the people of Israel. Since, then, they followed vain and profitless deceptions, the more heinous and inexcusable was their sin. It afterwards follows —

Jeremiah 2:9

9. Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead.

9. Propterea adhuc contendam (vel, disceptabo) vobiscum, dicit Jehovah; et cum filiis filiorum vestrorum disceptabo.

The particle {עוד} *oud,* yet, or still, is not without weight; for the Prophet intimates, that if God had already punished the perfidy and wickedness of the people, he still retained whole his right to do so, as though he had said, "Think not that you have suffered all your punishment, though I have already severely visited your fathers for their wickedness and obstinacy; for as ye proceed in the same course, and as there is no moderation nor limits to your sins, I will not desist from what I have a right to do, but will punish to the last both you and your children, and all succeeding generations." We now then understand what the Prophet means.

It is indeed usual with hypocrites foolishly to cast off all fear, especially after having been once chastised by the Lord; for they think it enough that they have suffered punishment for their sins; and they do not consider that God moderately punishes the sins of men to invite others to repentance, and that he is in such a way sharp and severe as yet to restrain himself, in order that there may be room for hope, and that they who have sinned, while waiting for pardon, may thus more readily and willingly return to the right way. This is what hypocrites do not consider; but they think that God on the first occasion expends all his rigor, and so they promise themselves impunity as to the future. As for instance, — When God chastises a city, or a country, with war, pestilence, or famine, while the evils continue there is dread and anxiety: most of those whom God thus afflicts sigh and groan, and even howl; but as soon as some relaxation takes place, they shake off the yoke, and having no concern for their wickedness, they return again as dogs to their vomit. It is hence necessary to declare to hypocrites what we

[35] Some say that idols are referred to; and others, as Calvin think that the false gods are intended: the meaning is the same; only the context seems more favorable to the latter idea. The Septuagint have a neuter adjective, "After what is profitless-{ἀνωφελοῦσ} --- have they gone." The verb for profit is plural; and if we take {לא} only as a negative, both the antecedent and relative are omitted: but {לא} here, and in Jeremiah 2:11, and in other places, is evidently a noun or a pronoun, signifying none or nothing: and like neb, none, in Welsh, it is either singular or plural, according to the verb in connection with it. It precedes here a verb in the plural number, and in Jeremiah 2:11, in the singular. The relative is often understood both in Hebrew and in Welsh before future verbs, and in both languages especially when the present time or act is intended. In the present instance, both languages may be considered to be literally the same. The Hebrew, word for word, may be thus rendered in Welsh: Arol neb a lesant y rhodiasant. After none (who) profit have they walked. That is, After none who can do them good have they gone. --- Ed.

see to have been done here by Jeremiah, — that God so visits men for their sins, that in future he ceases not to pursue the same course, when he sees men so refractory as not to profit under his scourges.

Still, therefore, he says: this threat no doubt exasperated the minds of the nation: for as they dared to clamor against God, as we find in many places, and said that his ways were thorny, they spared not the prophets, and this we shall hereafter see: they indeed gave the prophets an odious character; and what? "These prophets," they said, "chatter nothing else but burdens, burdens, as though God ever fulminated against us; it would be better to close our ears than to be continually frightened by their words." It must then have been a severe thing to the Jews, when the Prophet said, *Still God will contend with you* But it was needful so to do.

Let us then learn from this passage, that whenever God reproves us, not only in words, but in reality, and reminds us of our sins, we do not so suffer for one fault as to be free for the future, but that until we from the heart repent, he ever sounds in our ears these words, *Still God will contend with you:* and a real contention is meant; for Jeremiah speaks not of naked doctrine, but intimates that the Jews were to be led before God's tribunal, because they ceased not to provoke his wrath: [36] and he declares the same thing respecting their children and the third generation. It afterwards follows —

Jeremiah 2:10-11

10. For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing.

10. Nempe (vel, nam) transite ad insulas Chittim (Graeciae, hoc est, ad omnes regiones transmarinas,) et videte, et in Kedar (hoc est, in oppositam partem, nempe versus Aratbiam) mittite, et considerate diligenter, et videte, an factum sit sicut hoc (id est, an factum sit aliquid simile:)

11. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit,

11. An mutaverit gens deos, et ipsi non sunt dii? et populus meus mutavit gloriam suam in id quod non prodest.

Here, by a comparison, he amplifies the wickedness and ingratitude of his own nation, — that they had surpassed in levity all heathen nations; for he says that all nations so agreed in one religion, that each nation followed what it had received from its ancestors. How then was it that the God of Israel was repudiated and rejected by his own people? If there was such persistency in error, why did not truth secure credit among them who had been taught by the mouth of God himself, as though they had been even in heaven? This is the drift of the Prophet's meaning, when he says, *Go into*

[36] Gataker thinks that it was verbal pleading: "It is as if he had said, 'I have argued the case with your forefathers already, let me debate the matter a little further with you, and let your posterity also consider well what I now say,' (see Deuteronomy 31:19, 21.) And so is the same word afterwards used for debating the case or pleading, verse 29 (Jeremiah 2:29)." Henry, Adam Clarke, and Blayney, take the same view; but Scott seems to agree with Calvin The verb {רוב,} followed as it is here by ,{את} ever means a verbal dispute or contention. See Numbers 20:13; Nehemiah 13:11, 17; Proverb 25:9; Isaiah 45:9. --- Ed

the islands of Chittim, and send into Kedar

He mentions Greece on one side, and the East on the other, and states a part for the whole. The Hebrews, as we have seen in Daniel, called the Greeks Chittim, though they indeed thought that the term belonged properly to the Macedonians; but the Prophet no doubt included in that term not only the whole of Greece and the islands of the Mediterranean, but also the whole of Europe, so as to take in those parts, the whole of France and Spain. There is indeed some difference made in the use of the word; but when taken generally, it was understood by the Hebrews, as I have said, to include France, Spain, Germany, as well as Greece; and they called those countries islands, though distant from the sea, because they carried on no commerce with remote nations: hence they thought the countries beyond the sea to be islands; and the Prophet spoke according to what was customary. [37]

He then bids them to *pass into the islands,* southward as well as northward; and then he bids them, on the other hand, to send to explore the state of the East, Arabia as well as India, Persia, and other countries; for under the word *Kedar* he includes all the nations of the East; and as that people were more barbarous than others, he mentions them rather than the Persians or the Medes, or any other more celebrated nation, in order more fully to expose the disgraceful conduct of the Jews. *Go* then, or *send,* to all parts of the world, and *see* and *diligently consider,* see and see again; as though he said, that so great was the stupidity of the Jews, that they could not be awakened by a single word, or by one admonition. This then is the reason why he bids them carefully to inquire, though the thing itself was very plain and obvious. But this careful inquiry, as I have said, was enforced not on account of the obscurity of the subject, but for the purpose of reproving the sottishness of that perverse nation, which must have been conscious of its gross impiety, and yet indulged itself in its own vices.

Hence he says, *Yea, pass over unto the islands;* and then he adds, *see whether there is a thing like this;* that is, such a monstrous and execrable thing can nowhere be found. An explanation follows, *No nation has changed its gods, and yet they are no gods;* that is, religion among all nations continues the same, so that they do not now and then change their gods, but worship those who have been as it were handed down to them by their fathers. *And yet,* he says, *they are no gods* If it had been only said, that no nation has changed its gods, the impiety of Israel would not have been so grievously exposed; but the Prophet takes it for granted, that all the nations were deceived and led away after fictitious gods, and yet remained constant in their delusions. Now, God does not set this forth as a virtue; he does not mean that the constancy of the nations was worthy of praise in not departing

[37] Parkhurst doubts whether the word {,{איים rendered islands, has ever strictly that meaning. He renders the singular, ,{אי} a settlement, a habitation, and refers to Job 22:30; Isaiah 20:6; and says, that the plural, in Isaiah 42:15, ought to be rendered ``habitable places,'' and not ``islands,'' as in our version. It may be rendered here, ``countries,'' as by Blarney. --- Ed

from their own superstitions; but, compared with the conduct of the chosen people, this constancy might however appear as laudable. We hence see that the whole is to be thus read connectively, — "Though no nation worships the true God, yet religion remains unchangeable among them all; and yet ye have perfidiously forsaken me, and you have not forsaken a mere phantom, but your *glory*."

He sets here the favor of God in opposition to the delusions of false gods, when he says, *My people have changed their own glory* For the people knew, not only through the teaching of the law, but also by sure evidences, that God was their glory; and yet they departed from him. It is then the same as though Jeremiah had said, that all the nations would condemn the Israelites at the last day, because their very persistency in error would prove the greater wickedness of the Jews, inasmuch as they were apostates from the true God, and from that God who had so clearly manifested to them his power.

Now, if one asks, whether religion has been changed by any of the nations? First, we know that this principle prevailed everywhere, — that there was to be no innovation in the substance of religion: and Xenophon highly commends this oracle of Apollo, — that those gods were rightly worshipped who have been received by tradition from ancestors. The devil had thus bewitched all nations, — "No novelty can please God; but be ye content with the usual custom which has descended to you from your forefathers." This principle then was held by the Greeks and the Asiatics, and also by Europeans. It was therefore for the most part true what the Prophet says here: and we know that when a comparison is made, it is enough if the illustration is for the most part, {επὶ} {τὸ} {πολὺ}, as Aristotle says, confirmed by custom and constant practice. We hence see that the charge of levity against the Jews was not unsuitably brought by Jeremiah, when he said, that no nation had changed its gods, but that God had been forsaken by his people whose *glory* he was; that is, to whom he had given abundant reasons for glorying. [38]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast made thyself known to us in so plain a manner, not only by thy law and prophets, but also by thine only — begotten Son, that the knowledge of thy truth ought to have already struck deep roots in us, — O grant, that we may continue firm and constant in thy holy vocation, and make continual progress in it, and ever hasten forward to the goal: and do thou so humble us under thy mighty hand, that we may know that we are paternally chastised by thee, and profit under thy discipline, until being at length purified from all our vices we shall come to enjoy that immortal life, which has been made known to us by Christ, when

[38] "Their glory" are by some considered to be God himself, and not the glory, that is, the honor, dignity, and greatness which he bestowed on the people, as Calvin here intimates: but the latter is more consistent with what follows, which literally is, "for nothing that profits:" for the {{לא here, as in Jeremiah 2:8, is evidently a noun, or a pronoun. The comparison here is between what God gives and what false gods give; the comparison before was between God himself and the false gods. God gives glory, renders his people great and illustrious; but the false gods give nothing that profits, that really benefits, or does any good. --- Ed

we shall be able fully to rejoice in thee. — Amen.

Lecture Sixth.

Jeremiah 2:12

12. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD.

12. Obstupescite coeli super hoc, et expavescite, desolamini (vel, arescite) valde, dicit Jehova.

When the Prophet saw that he had to do with besotted men, almost void of all reason, he turned to address the heavens: and it is a way of speaking, common in the Prophets, — that they address the heaven and the earth, which have no understanding, and leave men endued with reason and knowledge. This they were wont to do in hopeless cases, when they found no disposition to learn.

Hence now the Prophet bids the *heavens* to be *astonished* and to be *terrified* and to be *reduced* as it were unto *desolation;* as though he had said, "This is a wonder, which almost confounds the whole order of nature; it is the same as though we were to see heaven and earth mixed together." We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet: for by this representation he intended to shew, how detestable was the impiety of the people, since the heavens, though destitute of reason, ought justly to dread such a monstrous thing.

As to the words, some render them, "Be desolate, ye heavens," and then repeat the same: but as {שמם} *shemem*, means to be astonished, the rendering I have given suits the present passage better, "Be astonished, ye heavens, for this," and then, "be ye terrified and dried up;" for: {חרב} *chareb,* signifies to become dry, and sometimes, to be reduced to a solitude or a waste. [39] It afterwards follows: —

Jeremiah 2:13

13. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

13. Certe (vel quia) duo mala fecit populus meus, Me dereliquerunt fontem aquarum viventium, ut foderent sibi puteos (vel, cisternas,) cisternas contritas (vel, confractas,) quae non continent aquas.

If a reason is given here why the Prophet had bidden the heavens to be astonished and terrified, then we must render the words thus, "For two evils have my people done:" but I rather think that the preceding verse is

[39] Blarney, following the Septuagint, renders the verbs as in the third person plural. "The heavens are astonished," etc.; but it is better to take them as being in the second person in the imperative mood, as both Aquila and Symmachus do. Similar passages are so construed, see Isaiah 1:2. There is alliteration in the two first words, as though we said in our language, "Heave, ye heavens:" and there is a gradation in the expressions — be astonished — be horrified — be wholly wasted, or consumed, or dried up, — Astonished be ye, the heavens, for this, And be horrified, Be ye wholly wasted, saith Jehovah. The alteration in the last verb, in accordance with the Syriac, {,{חרדו which means to ``tremble,'' instead of ,{חרבו} though proposed by Secker and approved by Horsley, is by no means necessary, and countenanced by no MSS. Nor is the emendation of Blarney, in conformity with the Septuagint, to be at all approved. These alterations are not only unnecessary, but destroy the expressive and striking character of the passage. Learned men are sometimes led too much by an innovating spirit. --- Ed

connected with the former verses. The Prophet had said, "Go to the farthest lands, and see whether any nation has changed its gods, while yet they are mere inventions." I think then the subject is closed with the exclamation in the preceding verse, when the Prophet says, "Be astonished, ye heavens." It then follows, "Surely, two evils have my people done," even these, — "they have forsaken me," — and then, "they sought for themselves false gods." When any one forsakes an old friend and connects himself with a new one, it is an iniquitous and a base conduct: but when there is no compensation, there is in it united together, folly, levity, and madness. If I despise what I know to be profitable to me, and embrace what I understand will be to my hurt, does not such a choice prove madness? This then is what the Prophet now means, when he says, that the people had sinned not only by departing from the true God, but also by going over, without any compensation, unto idols, which could confer no good on them.

He says that they had done *two evils:* the first was, they *had forsaken God;* and the other, they had fallen away unto false and imaginary gods. But the more to amplify their sin, he makes use of a similitude, and says that God is a *fountain of living waters;* and he compares idols to perforated or *broken cisterns, which hold no water* [40] When one leaves a living fountain and seeks a cistern, it is a proof of great folly; for cisterns are dry except water comes elsewhere; but a fountain has its own spring; and further, where there is a vein perpetually flowing, and a perennial stream of waters, the water is more salubrious and much better. The waters which rain brings into cisterns are never so wholesome as those which flow from their own native vein: and when the very receptacles of water are full of chinks, what must they be but empty? Hence then God charges the people with madness, because he was forsaken, who was a fountain and a fountain of living waters; and further, because the people sought unprofitable things when they went after their idols. For what is to be found in idols? some likeness; for the superstitious think that they labor not in vain, when they worship false gods, and they hope to derive some benefit. There are then some resemblances to the true in false religions; and hence the Prophet compares false gods to wells, because they were made hollow, suitable to hold water; but there was not a drop of water in them, as they were broken cisterns.

We now perceive what the Prophet meant, — that we cannot possibly be free from guilt when we leave the only true God, as in him is found for us a fullness of all blessings, and from him we may draw what may fully satisfy us.

[40] Blarney innovated here, because he seemed not rightly to distinguish between the two words that are here used. Both are rendered "cisterns" in our version; but they are two distinct words, though they are similar, and mean similar or the same things. The first is {,בארות} pits, and the other is {בארת} in our received text, but ought evidently to be ,{ברות} or, as in one MS., ,{בורת} which means ``wells'' or pools. The first is a feminine noun, the last is a masculine noun; and hence we find that the adjective added here to the last word is masculine, as in other places, see Deuteronomy 6:11; 2 Chronicles 26:10; Nehemiah 9:25; while the first is accompanied with adjectives in the feminine gender. The verse may be thus rendered, --- For two evils have my people done, --- Me have they forsaken, the fountain of living waters; In order to dig for themselves pits, Broken wells, which cannot hold water. It is singular that Adam Clarke should say that these cisterns were ``vessels in put together,'' since they were pits dug in the ground to receive rain-water. --- Ed.

When therefore we despise the bounty of God, which is sufficient to make us in every way happy, how great must be our ingratitude and wickedness? Yet God remains ever like himself: as then he has called himself the fountain of living waters, we shall at this day find him to be so, except he is prevented by our wickedness and neglect. But the Prophet adds another crime; for when we fall away from God, our own conceits deceive us; and whatever may appear to us at the first view to be wells or fountains, yet when thirst shall come, we shall not find a drop of water in all our devices, they being nothing else but dry cavities. It follows —

Jeremiah 2:14-17

14 Is Israel a servant? is he a homeborn slave? why is he spoiled?

14. An servus Israel? An (vel, si) genitus domi? (hoc est, an verna? accipiunt enim puerum, domi natum pro verna:) quare factus est in praedam?

15. The young lions roared upon him, and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant.

15. Super eum rugient (vel, rugiunt) leones (alii vertunt, catulos leonum, et soepe significat minores leones hoc nomen sed ubi adjungitur reliquis, ubi autem solum ponitur, ego semper interpretor generaliter pro leonibus,) miserunt vocem suam; posuerunt terram ejus in vastitatem; urbes ejus exustae sunt (vel, destructae, nam, {צצץ} tandem valet atque hoc loco) absque habitatore.

16. Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head.

16. Etiam filii Noph (hoc est, Mempheos, vocant enim Hebroei Noph urbem quae fuit olim metropolis Egypti) et Thaphanes (vel, Thaphis, ut vertunt Grraeci) frangent tibi verticem.

17. Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, when he led thee by the way?

17. An non hoc fuit tibi, deserere tuum, (hoc est, quod deserueris) Jehovam Deum tuum, quo tempore ducebat to per viam.

These verses are to be read together; for the Prophet first shews that Israel was not as to his original condition miserable, but that this happened through a new cause, and then he mentions the cause. He then first asks, *whether Israel was a servant or a slave?* God had adopted them as his people, and had promised to be so bountiful to them as to render them in every way happy; and what was more, as a proof of their happiness, he said, In thee shall all nations be blessed. (Genesis 12:3; Genesis 22:18; Genesis 26:4; Genesis 28:14.) We then see what was the original condition of Israel; they excelled all other nations, because they were God's peculiar people, they were his heritage, they were a royal priesthood.

Hence the Prophet, as though astonished at something new and strange, asks this question, *Is Israel a servant?* He was free beyond all nations; for he was the first — born son of God: it was therefore necessary to inquire for the cause why he was so miserable; for he says afterwards, that *lions*

roared against him, and sent forth their voice; he says, that their *cities were burnt,* or destroyed; he says, that their land was reduced to desolation; and at length he adds, *Has not this done these things to thee?* This again is put as a question, but it is doubly affirmative, for it takes away every doubt: "What do you say is the cause why you are so miserable? for all are hostile to you, and you are exposed to the wrongs of all: whence can you say has all this proceeded, except from your own wickedness?" We now see what the Prophet means.

But that what he says may be more clear, we must remember that he reminds the people, by way of reproach, of the benefits which God had conferred on them. As then the children of Abraham had been honored with so many singular favors that they had the preeminence over all the world, this dignity is now referred to, but only for the purpose of exposing their base conduct, as though he had said, "God did not deceive you, when he promised to be bountiful to you; his adoption is not deceptive nor in vain: hence you would have been happier than all other nations, had not your own wickedness rendered you miserable." We now see for what end the Prophet asked, *Is Israel a servant or a slave?* They were indeed on an equality with other people, as they were by nature; but as they had been chosen by God, and as he had favored them with that peculiar privilege, the Prophet asks, whether they were servants, as though he had said, "What is it that prevents that blessedness to appear among you, which God has promised? for it was not God's design to disappoint you: it then follows that you are miserable through your own fault." [41]

And by saying, *Why is he become a prey,* he intimates that except Israel had been deprived of God's protection, they would not have been thus exposed to the caprice of their enemies. They were not then become a prey except for this reason, because God had forsaken them, according to what is said in the song of Moses,

"How should one chase a thousand, and ten should put to flight as many thousands, except God had given us up as captives, except we had been shut up by his hand."
(Deuteronomy 32:30.)

For Moses in that passage does also in an indirect manner remind the people how often and how wonderfully God had given them victories over

[41] The difficulty of understanding this passage has arisen from not considering the questions in a negative sense, as implying a strong denial-"Is Israel a servant (or, rather a slave)?" No, by no means. "Is he one begotten in the house," that is, in a state of bondage? No, by no means. Then the following question comes naturally; since he is neither a purchased slave, nor a slave born in the house, "why has he become a prey?" That there were two sorts of slaves of this kind is evident from many parts of Scripture. See Genesis 17:12, Genesis 17:23, Genesis 17:27; Exodus 21:4; Leviticus 22: 11. This is the view taken evidently in our version, by Jun and Trem., Piscator, Gataker, Grotius, Henry, and Scott. Blarney renders the two first lines thus, — Is Israel a slave? or if a child of the household, Wherefore is he exposed to spoil? He considers "the child of the household" to be the son and the heir, as Isaac was, and refers to Galatians 4:7. Horsley coincides with him. But the usus loquendi gives no countenance to this view, while it confirms the other. To refer to filiusfamilias in Latin is to no purpose. "The child of the house," as the expression literally is, and similar phrases, ever mean in Scripture those who were born slaves in a family. — Ed.

their enemies, and thus he leaves it to their posterity, when in distress, to consider how the change came that one should chase a thousand; that is, how could it be, that they, possessing great forces, should yet be put to flight by their enemies; for they were not wont to turn their backs, but to conquer their enemies: it then follows, that they were made captives by God, and not by the men who chased them. So also here the Prophet shews, that Israel would not have been made a prey, had they not been deprived of God's assistance.

He afterwards adds, *Over him roar the lions.* The Prophet seems not simply to compare the enemies of Israel to lions on account of their cruelty, but also by way of contempt, as though he had said, that Israel found that not only men were incensed against them, but also wild beasts: and it is more degrading when God permits us to be torn by the beasts of the field. It is then the same, as though he had said, that Israel were so miserably treated, that they were not only slain by the hands of enemies, but were also exposed to the beasts of prey. And then he adds, *they have sent forth their voice;* which is the same as to say, that Israel, whom God was wont to protect by his powerful band, were become the food of wild beasts, and that lions, as it were in troops, were roaring against them.

He then adds, without a metaphor, that *his land was laid waste,* and *his cities burnt without an inhabitant* This language cannot be suitably applied to lions or to any other wild beasts; but what he had figuratively said before, he now explains in a plain manner, and says, that the land was desolate, that the cities were cut off or burnt up. Now this, as we have said, could not have been the case, had not Israel departed from God, and had been on this account deprived of his help. [42]

By way of amplification he adds, *Also the sons of Noph and of Tephanes shall for thee break the head,* or, the crown of the head. We shall hereafter see that the Israelites were wont to seek help from the Egyptians. The particle {גם}, *gam*, may be thus explained, "Not only those who have been hitherto professed enemies to thee, but even thy friends, in whose help thou didst confide, shall turn their power against thee and break for thee thy head." Some think that their degradation is here enhanced, because the Egyptians were an unwarlike people; and ancient historians say that men there followed the occupations of women; but as this is not mentioned in Scripture, and as the Egyptians are not thus spoken of in it, I prefer to follow the usual explanation, that the Egyptians, though confederate with Israel, would yet

[42] The verse literally is as follows,- Over him shall young lions roar; They have uttered their voice, And have made his land a waste; His cities are grown over with grass, Without an inhabitant. The verb in the first line is future, the other verbs are in the past tense; and Blarney thinks that they are so put to denote the certainty of what is said, as it is often done by the prophets: and this is rendered probable by what is contained in Jeremiah 4:7, where the same judgment is spoken of. The verb {,נצתה in the received text, ought evidently to be ,{נצתו according to the Keri and twenty MSS.; and so we find it in Jeremiah 9:10. Our version and Calvin give it the idea of ``burning;'' but according to Leigh and Parkhurst, its meaning is, to shoot forth, to produce grass, or to grow over with grass, as the case is with ruined cities; and the words connected with it here and in other places seem to favor this meaning. It is rendered in our version, ``laid waste,`` in Jeremiah 4:7, and ``desolate'' in Jeremiah 46:19. --- Ed

be adverse to them, and had been so already. By the *head,* some understand the chief men among the people of Israel: but we may render it thus, *they will break for thee the head,* as we say in our language, *Ils to romperont la tete,* or, *Ils to frotteront la tete;* and this, in my judgment, is the real meaning. [43]

Now follows the cause; the Prophet, after having shewn that Israel were forsaken by God, now mentions the reason why it so happened, *Has not this done it for thee?* Some read in the second person, "Hast thou not done this for thee?" but the meaning is still nearly the same. More probable, however, is the rendering which others have given, "Has not this happened to thee, because thou hast forsaken Jehovah thy God?" Jeremiah, in short, teaches us that the cause of all the evils was the defection of the people, as though he had said, "Thou hast concocted for thyself all this evil; then must thou swallow it, and know that the blame cannot be cast on God; for he would have been faithful to thee, except thine impiety had prevented him. God has not, indeed, chosen thee in vain, nor has he in vain preferred thee to other nations; but thou hast rejected his kindness. Thy condition then would have never been as it is, hadst thou not procured thine own ruin." How so? "Because thou hast departed from thy God."

And he further exaggerates this sin by saying, *At the time when he led thee in the way* To lead in the way, is rightly to govern, so as to make people happy. The Prophet then shews, that the people's perfidy and defection were without excuse in rejecting the worship of their God, for they were happy during the time they served him. Had they been in various ways tempted, or tried, they might have reigned some pretense. "We thought ourselves deceived in hoping in the true God, for he concealed his favor from us; we were therefore compelled by necessity. There ought at least some indulgence to be shewn to our levity; for we could have formed no other conjecture but that God had removed far from us." The Prophet meets this objection, as he does in the fifth verse, "What iniquity have your fathers found in me?" and, as it is done in another place,

"My people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I been troublesome

[43] There have been many expositions of this latter clause, which may be seen in the Assembly's Annotations, which were written, as to Isaiah and Jeremiah, by the learned Gataker. He gives the preference to the idea, that the crown of the head means the best and the principal part of the land, and to break the crown means the plunder of this portion. See Isaiah 28:4. This seems to correspond in meaning with the previous verse. It was the opinion of Blarney that an allusion is prophetically made to the slaying of Josiah by the Egyptians. The words literally are, — They shall break thee, the crown of the head. "The crown of the head" seems to be explanatory of "thee;" it might then be rendered, — They shall break thee, even the crown of thy head. The Septuagint mistook one letter for another, and took the verb to be, {,ידעוך ``they knew thee,'' instead of {ירעוך} ``they shall break thee;'' but what they made the last word to be, it is hard to know, for they rendered it, ``and searched thee.'' The Vulgate has followed the Septuagint; and the idea is a very indecent one: and there is nothing in the context to favor it. The Targum's paraphrase is this, ``They shall slay thy brave men, and plunder thy riches;'' which countenances the idea evidently conveyed by the figurative terms of the Hebrew. The next verse literally rendered is as follows, --- Is not this what thou wilt do for thyself, By thy forsaking of Jehovah thy God, At the time he was leading thee in the way? The first verb is no doubt future, whether it be rendered in the second or third person. The sentence may be rendered in Welsh without ``Is,'' or the relative ``what,'' and word for word, --- Ai nid hyn a wnai i'th hun? And the future is understood as the present. Blayney's version is, --- Shall not this be done unto thee, Because thou hast forsaken Jehovah thy God, At the time that he led thee in the way? --- Ed.

to thee?"
(Micah 6:4)

for God in that passage shews that he was prepared to defend his own cause, and to clear himself from whatever the people might object to him. So also he does in this place, "I have led thee," he says, "in the way;" that is, "Thou didst live happily under my government, and yet I could not retain thee by my goodness while I kindly treated thee; and thou knewest that nothing could be better for thee than to continue under my protection; but thou hast determined to go over into the service of idols. Now what excuse hast thou, or what pretense is left thee?" We hence see, that the sin of the people is greatly enhanced, for they were induced by no temptation or trial to forsake God, but through mere perfidy gave themselves up to idols: and a confirmation of this verse follows —

Jeremiah 2:18

18. And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?

18. Et nunc quid tibi ad viam Egypti, ut bibas aquas Nili? et quid tibi ad viam Assur, ut bibas aquam fluminis? (Nempe, Eeuphratis.)

As I have just stated, the Prophet confirms what I said, — that the people could not ascribe the cause of their evils to others; for they ought to have imputed to themselves whatever they suffered; and at the same time their sin was doubled, because they looked here and there for vain remedies, and thus accumulated for themselves new causes of misery; for they ought to have acknowledged no other remedy for their evils except reconciliation with God. If, for instance, any one being ill knew the cause of his disease, and instead of adopting the true remedy had recourse to some vain expedients injurious to his recovery, is he not deemed worthy to die for having willfully despised what might have healed him, and for indulging himself in what is deceptive and fallacious? The same thing does Jeremiah now reprove in the people of Israel. "If you carefully inquire," saith God, "how it is that you are so miserable, you will find that this cannot be ascribed to me, but to your own sins. Now, then, what ought you to have done? what remedy ought you to have sought, except to reconcile yourselves to me, to seek pardon from me, and to strive to correct your wickedness? I would then have immediately healed you; and had you come to me, you would have found me the best physician. And why do you now act in a way quite contrary? for you run after vain helps; now you flee to Egypt, then you flee to Assyria; but you will gain nothing by these expedients." We now understand the object of the Prophet. For after having proved the people to be guilty of impiety, and shewn that the evils which they suffered could be ascribed neither to God nor to chance, nor to any such causes, he now shews to them, that the one true remedy was to return into favor with God; but that it was an evidence of extreme madness to run now to Egypt, and then to Assyria.

Now this reproof is supported by history; for the people had at one time the Assyrians as their enemies, and at another the Egyptians; and the changes were many. God employed different scourges to awaken the sottishness of the people; at one time, he whistled for the Egyptians, as we shall presently see; at another, he blew the trumpet in Assyria: so that the Israelites might know that they could never be safe without being under the government of God. But all these things being overlooked, such was the blindness of the people, that when they were assailed by the Assyrians, they fled to Egypt and sought aid from the Egyptians, and entered into a treaty with them; afterwards, when a change occurred, they sought a treaty with the Assyrians, and also bought it at a high price.

This madness is what the Prophet now reprobates, when he says, *What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt?* that is, "What advantage dost thou gain? How great is thy folly, since thou knowest that God is angry with thee, and that thou art suffering many evils? God is adverse to thee, and yet thou thinkest nothing of reconciliation. Thy healing would be to flee to God and to be reconciled to him; but what dost thou now do? Thou fleest to the Assyrians and to the Egyptians. How wretched is thy condition, and how great is thy folly in thus wearying thyself without any advantage!"

Now we may learn from this passage, that whenever God chastises us for our sins, we ought to seek a remedy, and not to rest in those vain comforts which Satan often suggests; for such charms introduce drowsiness, and healable diseases are by such means rendered fatal. What then ought we to do? We ought, as soon as we feel the scourges of God, to seek to return into favor with him; and not in vain shall be our effort. But if we look around us in all directions for help, our evils shall not be lessened but increased. To drink the waters of the Nile, and to drink the waters of Euphrates, is nothing else but to seek aids here and there.

He indeed alludes to the legations which had been sent; for they who went to Egypt drank of the waters of the Nile, and others of Euphrates. He yet speaks metaphorically, as though he had said, "God was ready to help thee, hadst thou betaken thyself to his mercy as thine asylum; but having neglected him, thou thoughtest it more advantageous to have such aids as Egypt and Assyria could bring. Thou thus seekest drink in remote countries, while God could give thee waters." And he seems to refer to the similitude which he had shortly before used: he had called God the fountain of living waters; as though he had said, "God is to thee a refreshing and perennial fountain, and there would be abundance of waters for thee wert thou satisfied with him; but thy desire is to drink the waters of the Nile, and the waters of the Euphrates." [44] We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet.

[44] No doubt this is the peculiar import of the passage, as though the Prophet had said, "What good to thee is to travel to Egypt to drink the waters of Sihor, a muddy river, (as the word imports;) and what good to thee is to travel to Assyria to drink the waters of the river, while thou hast at home a fountain of living, pure and perennial waters?" So Gataker considers the drift of the passage: — "To drink the water of Nilus in Egypt is put here for to seek help and relief there: but he delivereth it in these terms, as if he should say, that they could have nothing

He, no doubt, speaks of the waters of the Nile and of the Euphrates, because both those nations abounded apparently in wealth and power and in military forces. As, then, the people of Israel trusted in such auxiliaries, the Prophet here reproves their ingratitude, because they were not content with God's help, though that was not so visible and conspicuous. God, indeed, has help sufficient for us; and were we content with him alone, no doubt an abundance of good things would to a full satisfaction be given to us; and as he is not wearied in doing good, he would supply us with whatever is desirable: but as we cannot see his beneficence with carnal eyes, we are therefore carried away after the allurements of the world. We may hence learn that we are not to seek drink either from the Nile or from the Euphrates, that is, from the enticing things of the world, which make a great shew and display; but that we are, on the contrary, to drink from the hidden fountain which is concealed from us, in order that we may seek it by faith. It now follows —

Jeremiah 2:19

19. Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

19. Castigabit to malitia tua, et aversiones tuae, (vel, defectiones tuae) poenam de to exigent; et cognosces et scies, quod malum et amarum tuum derelinquere (ad verbum, hoc est, quod reliqueris) Jehovam Deum tuum, et quod timor meus super to non fuerit, dixit Dominus Jehova exeercitum.

Here again, the Prophet confirms what I have before stated, — that the people would at length find, willing or unwilling, what it was to deport from God; as though he had said, "As thou hast not hitherto learnt by so many evidences, that thy perfidy is the cause of all thy evils, God will heap evils on evils, that thou mayest at length know, even against thy will, that thou receivest, a reward due to thy wickedness." This is the sum of the whole.

But he says first, *chastise thee shall thy wickedness,* as though he had said, that though God ascended not his tribunal, nor put forth his hand to punish the people, yet judgment would be evident in their very sins. And this is much more powerful, and has greater weight in it than if the Prophet had said only, that God would inflict on the people a just punishment; *thy wickedness,* he says, *shall chastise thee;* and a similar mode of speaking is adopted by Isaiah;

"Stand;" he says, "against thee shall thy wickedness,"
(Isaiah 3:9; Isaiah 59:12)

to do there, or no errand thither, unless it were to drink of the puddle water of that river, when they had, or might have had, as good, yea, far better than that, nearer at hand, at home. See Jeremiah 18:14; so 2 Kings 1:3." Then the plainest version would be thus, — And now, what hast thou to do with a journey to Egypt, That thou mightest drink the waters of Sihor? And what hast thou to do with a journey to Assyria, That thou mightest drink the waters of the river? The comparison evidently is between the waters of Sihor and of the river Euphrates, and the living waters. As in other parts of Scripture the Euphrates is no doubt meant by the river, though here, as in Psalm 80:11, and Isaiah 7:20, the article {{ה is not prefixed to it. --- Ed

as though God had said, “If I were even to be silent and not to take upon me the office of a judge, and if there were no other accuser, and no one to plead the cause, yet stand against thee will thy wickedness, and fill thee with shame.” To the same purpose is what is said here, *thy wickedness* [45] *shall chastise thee*

But we must consider the reason why the Prophet said this. There were then, we know, complaints in the mouths of many, — that God was too rigid and severe. Since then they thus continually clamored against God; the Prophet repels such calumnies, and says that their wickedness was sufficient to account for the vengeance executed upon them. He says the same of their *turnings aside;* [46] but what he had said generally before, he now expresses more particularly, — that the people had withdrawn themselves from the worship of God and obedience to him. He therefore points out here the kind of wickedness of which they were guilty, as though he had said that there was no need of an accuser, of witnesses, or of a judge, but that the defections of the people alone would sufficiently avail to punish them.

He afterwards adds, *Thou shalt know and see how wicked and bitter it is to forsake Jehovah thy God* These are words hard in their construction; but we have already explained the meaning; “Thy forsaking,” or thy defection, means, “that thou hast forsaken thy God.” *And my fear was not on,* or, *in thee* Here, again, the Prophet points out as by the finger the sins of the people. He had before spoken of their turnings aside; but he now mentions their defection, — that the people had plainly and openly departed from the true God. They, indeed, ever continued some kind of worship in the Temple: but as the whole of religion was corrupted by many superstitions, and as there was no fidelity, no sincerity; and as they mingled the worship of idols with that of the true God, they had dearly departed from God, who is jealous of his honor, according to what is in the law, and allows of no rivals. (Exodus 20:5; Exodus 34:14) We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet.

He says, *Thou shalt know that it is an evil and a bitter thing, etc.* This must be applied to punishment; and he repeats what he had said before, — that the evils which the people then suffered did not happen by chance, and that as they were overwhelmed with many bitter sorrows, the cause was not to be sought afar off, for their bitterness, and whatever calamities they endured, flowed from their impiety. *Thou shalt* then *know* by the reward itself; even experience will convince thee what it is to depart from God; and he says, *from Jehovah thy God,* or, to forsake Jehovah thy God. For, if God

[45] Blarney renders it “adversity.” That the word sometimes means that, is true, but most commonly wickedness; and this is the sense required by the context: it must be that which corresponds in character with the word that follows — apostasy, or turning aside. “Wickedness” is the meaning sanctioned by all the early versions, as well as modern. — Ed.

[46] The word is singular in all the early versions. It is rendered “apostasy — {ἀποστασία},'' by the Septuagint, and, ``turning aside --- aversio,'' by the Vulgate Though there is no MS. in favor of the singular, yet the verb connected with it is in that number. The true reading no doubt is according to the versions, confirmed as it is by the number of the verb. --- Ed

had not made known his grace to the Israelites, their perverseness would not have been so detestable; but since they had found God to be a Father to them, and since he had so bountifully treated them, having been pleased to enter into a covenant with them, their wickedness was inexcusable.

And afterwards the person is changed, *And my fear was not in thee* Here at length the Prophet intimates, that they were destitute of every sense of religion; for by the fear of God is meant reverence for his name. Men often fall, we know, through mistake, and are deceived by the craft of Satan; and when made thus miserable they are to be pitied. But the Prophet shews here that the people were wholly undeserving of pardon. How so? Because there was no fear of God in them. "You cannot," he says, "object and say, that you have been deceived, or make any pretense by which you may cover your wickedness: it is evident that you have acted shamelessly and basely in forsaking thy God, for there was no fear of God in you. [47] He subjoins at last, *saith Jehovah of hosts:* by which words the Prophet secures more authority to what he had announced; for what he had said must have been very bitter to the people: and many of them, no doubt, according to their usual manner, shook their heads; for we know how insolent were most of them. Hence the Prophet here openly declares, that he was not the author of what he had said, but only the proclaimer; that it proceeded from God, and that he had spoken nothing but what God himself had commanded.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast hitherto shewn to us so many favors, since the time thou hast been pleased to adopt us as thy people, — O grant, that we may not forget so great a kindness, nor be led away by the allurements of Satan, nor seek for ourselves inventions, which may at length turn to our ruin; but that we may continue fixed in our obedience to thee, and daily call on thee, and drink of the fullness of thy bounty, and at the same time strive to serve thee from the heart, and to glorify thy name, and thus to prove that we are wholly devoted to thee, according to the great obligations under which thou hast laid us, when it had pleased thee to adopt us in thine only — begotten Son. — Amen.

Lecture Seventh

Jeremiah 2:20

20. For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and

[47] The verse literally is as follows, — 19. Chastise thee shall thy wickedness, And thy apostasy, it shall correct thee; Know then and see, That evil and bitter shall be Thy forsaking of Jehovah thy God; And my fear is not in thee, Saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts. The future is spoken of. They were warned; they were to know and see, or consider, that the forsaking of God, "the apostasy," would be afflictive and bitter: and then the cause of the "wickedness" first mentioned is stated, no "fear" of God. How "wickedness" was to chastise them, and "apostasy" to correct them, is signified, — they would turn out to be "evil" — afflictive — hurtful, and "bitter" — grievous — painfully distressing. Hence Grotfius's exposition cannot be right —"Thy wickedness shall be a proof that thou art justly punished." The reference is to the very evils and miseries to which their "wickedness" and "apostasy" would inevitably lead them. Their foreign alliances were eventually the means of their degradation and misery; and in seeking them, they forsook God as their protector; and by adopting idols, they forsook him as the object of their worship. — Ed.

thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot.

20. Quia a seculo confregi, [48] jugum tuum, disrupi vincula tua; et dixisti, Non serviam (vel, non transgrediar, est enim duplex lectio;) quia super omnem collem excelsum, et super omnem arborem frondosam tu discurristi meretrix.

As there are two readings in Hebrew, two meanings are given; for some think the verb to be, {עבד} *obed,* and others, {עבר} *ober,* the two letters being very similar. If we read, "I will not pass over," or, I will not transgress, the sense is, "When I broke thy yoke;" that is, "When I delivered thee from the tyranny of Egypt, then thou didst pledge thy faith to me." The covenant then made between God and the Israelites was mutual; for as God received them under his protection, when he became, as it were, their patron, so they, on the other hand, promised to submit to his authority. If we take this reading, the passage is an expostulation; as though God condemned here the people, for their ingratitude and perfidy. But the Prophet seems to mean another thing; and therefore I prefer the other reading, "I will not serve:" and yet I reject what interpreters have alleged; for this passage, I have no doubt, has been perverted. The prevailing exposition has been this, "I will not serve idols;" and they who seemed endued with some judgment did not see that this sense is unsuitable, and strained, or too far — fetched: and it may have been, and it seems to me probable, that for this reason the letter has been changed; for all gave this explanation, "Thou hast said, I will not serve idols:" but it is wholly a strained comment.

Now, on the contrary, I think that God here complains that the liberty which he had given to his people was turned into licentiousness: and this view is exactly suitable, as it is evident from the context, — *For from old time have I broken thy yoke* and *burst thy bonds: therefore thou hast said,* (the {ו} here is an illative,) *I will not serve;* that is, "When thou oughtest to have devoted thyself to me, who had become thy Redeemer, thou thoughtest that liberty to do thine own will was granted thee." And then the proof given of this is in every way appropriate, *for on every high hill, and under every shady tree, didst thou run here and there like a harlot* Then God shews

[48] On the authority of the Septuagint and of the Vulgate, Blarney has rendered this verb and the following in the second person, "thou hast broken," etc. There is no MS. that has this reading except one, and that as to the first verb only. The Targum and the Syriac retain the first person; but the Arabic the second. There is no necessity of a change, as Blarney intimates, arising from the usus loquendi; see Jeremiah 28:2; Isaiah 9:4. Jerome followed the Septuagint; but all modern versions have adopted the Hebrew text. Horsley gives this version, — 20. Verily of old time I broke thy yoke, I burst thy bands asunder; Yet thou saidst, I will not obey: Verily, upon every high hill, And under every green tree, Thou layest thyself along, playing the strumpet. Blarney having proposed to amend the last line, the Bishop justly says, "The text wants no correction." The verb {{צעה found only here, and in Jeremiah 48:12, and in Isaiah 51:14; Isaiah 63:1, means, according to Buxtorff and Leigh, to wander, to ramble, to travel up and down, and in a transitive sense, to cause to travel, or to migrate; but, according to Parkhurst, to stretch out, to lie along, and transitively to cause to be stretched out, that is, to throw down. The first meaning is more suitable to the passages referred to above. It is here a participle, preceded by a pronoun, ``thou,'' the way in which a present act is commonly expressed in Hebrew. The line may then be thus rendered, --- Thou ramblest, playing the strumpet. The Targum gives the meaning, though not the right tense, ``Thou didst worship idols.'' --- Ed.

that his redemption had been ill bestowed on the ungodly, who made a bad use of their privilege; for hence it was that they gave themselves up to all kinds of lasciviousness.

If any one prefers the other reading, I will not contend with him; and then the sense is, "I have long ago shaken off thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou hast said, (he speaks of the people as of a woman, for the feminine gender is used; and this is done, because God sustained the character of a husband towards that people; and whenever he accused them of defection, it was as though a husband charged an unchaste wife with the crime of adultery,) *thou hast* then *said to me,* that is, promised to me that thou wouldest not transgress;" or, in other words, "thou hast promised to be faithful to me, and pledged mutual chastity." Then the particle, כִּי, *ki,* which is commonly a causative, is to be taken here, according to its meaning in some other parts of Scripture, as an adversative, *Yet on every high hill and under every shady tree, thou didst run here and there like harlots,* who are seeking lovers.

But as I have already said, it seems to me more probable that God is here expostulating with the people, because they availed themselves of the favor of liberty as an occasion for licentiousness and wantonness: and thus the whole passage reads well, and every clause is most suitable, consistent the one with the other.

What God says, that he had *broken the yoke* and *burst the bands,* is confined by some to their first redemption: but I approve of what others say, — that the Prophet speaks here of many deliverances. We indeed know that the people were brought out of Egypt but once; but when they were afterwards oppressed, he stretched forth his hand to deliver them: God then had from old time, but at various periods, shaken off the yoke of the people; for this is evident from the book of Judges. As, then, the people were not made free, except through God's kindness, who redeemed them, ought they not to have devoted themselves to the service of their Redeemer? For on this condition, and for this end, they were redeemed by God, — that they might consecrate themselves wholly to him. God then now condemns the people for their ingratitude, because they thought that the yoke was shaken off, that they might be, as we shall hereafter find, like untamable wild beasts.

That what the Prophet means may be more evident to us, let us remember what Paul teaches us in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans (Romans 6), — that while we serve sin we are free from righteousness; for we go astray after our lusts, and are restrained by no bridle: but when God really sets us free from the miserable bondage of sin, we begin to be his servants, and the servants of righteousness; for being freed from sin we become the servants of righteousness: and this is the end of our redemption. But many turn the favor of God into an occasion for licentiousness, and thus abandon themselves, as though there was no law and no rule for a holy and upright life. God complains that this was the case with the people of

Israel: *Thou hast said, I will not serve* "It is base ingratitude, that thou hast not in the first place regarded me as thy Redeemer; and that in the second place thou hast not considered that I dealt so kindly with thee for this very purpose — that thou mightest be mine: for he who has been redeemed by another's kindness is no longer his own." God had redeemed that people; and redemption brought with it an obligation, by which the people were bound willingly to submit to God as their Ruler and King. *Thou hast* then *said, I will not serve* Thus God complains that his favor had been ill bestowed on the people, because they had abused their liberty, and turned it into lasciviousness. [49]

And the reason that is subjoined more fully explains the meaning, *for thou didst run here and there as a harlot, on every high hill and under every shady tree* For we know that the Israelites, whenever they departed from God, had some particular places, on hills and under trees, as though greater sanctity were there than anywhere else. And at this day the case is the same with the Papists; for the devotion, or rather the diabolical madness, by which they are carried away, is of a similar kind. "O! this place, they say, "is more favorable to devotion than another; there is in it more sanctity." Of the same opinion were the Israelites: for they thought that they were nearer heaven when they went up to a mountain; they also thought that they had a more familiar intercourse with God when concealed under shady trees. And we see that the same folly has ever bewitched all heathen nations: for they imagined that God was nigher them on hills, and thought that there was some hidden divinity in fountains and under the shades of trees. As, then, this superstition had long prevailed among the Israelites, God here reproves them, because they *ran here and there*

But we must further notice the comparison: he says, that they were like harlots, who, having cast off all shame, run here and there, not only because they burn with insane lust, but are also carried away by their own avariciousness. *Thou, harlot,* he says, *didst run here and there* on all the high hills, and under all the shady trees; as though he had said, "This is what I have effected in delivering thee! thou thinkest that unbridled liberty has been granted thee! Hence, then, it is that thou art become so wanton as to follow thy base lusts." It follows —

Jeremiah 2:21

21. Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?

[49] The received Text has {,עבד to serve, and the Keri, ,{עבר} to transgress. In favor of the latter there are about 30 MSS., while the rest of those examined by Kennicott (in all 198, 71 examined throughout, and 127 on particular parts) retain the former verb, and also all the early versions, the Septuagint, the Syriac, the Arabic, and the Vulgate The Targum only has the latter. Piscator, Jun and Trem , Capellus, Blarney, and Horsley decide with Calvin in favor of the former; while Munster and Gataker side with our version and that of Geneva, in which the latter has been adopted. Clearly the former has the weight of authority: and the contrast, too, is striking, ``I have broken thy bonds of slavery; but thou hast refused to serve or obey me.'' The former part of this verse is of the same purport with Jeremiah 2:6, and the latter with Jeremiah 2:25. The verse begins with ,{כי} rendered ``for'' in our version, by Calvin, and many others, but ``surely'' by Blarney, and ``verily'' by Horsley It is omitted in the Vulgate. Were it rendered ``though,'' the meaning would be more evident, --- Though from old time I had broken thy yoke, I had burst thy bands asunder; Yet thou hast said, ``I will not obey:'' For on every high hill and under every green tree Thou ramblest, playing the strumpet. --- Ed.

21. Et ego plantavi to vineam electam (vineam nobilem, vel, exquisitam, hoc enim significat nomen, {שורק},) totam fidele semen (hoc est, semen probum); et quomodo conversa es mihi degenerationes vitis alienae?

God here confirms what is said in the last verse; for he condemned the Israelites for having perversely run here and there after their superstitions, when yet they had been redeemed for this end, — that they might be ruled by the hand of God. Hence he says, *I planted thee as a choice vine;* that is, "When I redeemed thee from thine enemies, I did not give thee permission thus to prostitute thyself without any restraint, without any shame; for I planted thee as a choice vine."

The metaphor is well known, and often occurs; for God frequently compares his Church to a vine. He calls it generally his heritage, or his land; but as vines excel other possessions, (for they are usually preferred to pasture lands, or to cultivated fields,) as then vines are the most valuable property, God hereby testifies how highly he values his Church; for he calls it his vine rather than his pasture or his field, when he speaks of it. So he does in this place, "I did not deliver thee from Egypt, that I might afterwards throw aside every care of thee; but my purpose was, that thou shouldest strike roots, and become an heritage precious to me, as an exquisite and a noble vine. I, therefore, *planted thee a generous vine,* {שורק} *shurek,* that thou mightest bring me forth fruit."

Then he says, *a wholly right seed;* [50] that is, "I planted thee for this end, — that thou mightest produce fruit acceptable and pleasant to me." God regards here his own grace, and not the character of the people; for that people, as it is well known, was never a true seed: but God here shews the purpose for which he had redeemed the people, which was, that they might be like a choice vine. *How then?* he adds. God speaks here of their corruptions with wonder, for the indignity was such as was enough to astonish all men: *how then art thou turned to me into degenerations!* So I render {סורום} *surim,* though the word is not in common use in Latin: but it is enough for me if we understand the meaning of the Prophet. The word is derived from {סור} *sur,* to turn aside, or back. We ought to say then correctly, "into turnings aside." But as this would be obscure, when the vine is spoken of, I have not hesitated to fix on another word: *How then art thou turned to me into the degenerations of a strange vine!* Some give this version, "into useless branches of grapes:" but I know not whence they have taken the words. I wish to keep to what is more genuine, — that the vine, which ought to have been fruitful, had so degenerated that it produced nothing, as we shall find in another place, but wild grapes. [51] And he calls them the turnings aside

[50] The word means not only the seed of vegetables, but whatever forms that from which anything grows. It is applied as a verb to the planting of shoots or cuttings in Isaiah 17:10. The proper rendering here would be, — The whole of it a genuine plant (or shoot). What is rendered "choice vine," {{שורק is the yellow vine; the best was so called, because it produced wine of that color. --- Ed

[51] Much difference exists as to the literal meaning of this clause, though the general meaning is quite evident. None of the early versions are the same. The word {{סורי is rendered, ``into bitterness --- {εἰς} {πικρίαν},'' by the Septuagint; ``thou hast rebelled,'' by the Syriac; ``into what is corrupt --- in pravurn,'' by the Vulgate;

of a strange vine, which ceases to be the choice vine, {שורק}, *shurek,* and is turned to a wild vine, which produces nothing but sour or bitter fruit: and in the last place, as it brought forth nothing useful, God justly calls it a strange vine. It follows —

Jeremiah 2:22

22. For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD.

22. Etiam si lveris to nitro (ut vertunt,) et multiplicaveris tibi borith (alii exponunt, herbam fullonum; alii, saponem; quod ad rei summam spectat, nulla est ambiguitas, quoniam intelligit Deus nullo artificio, nullis herbis posse maculas populi purgari,) impressa est (vel, insculpta est, vel, signata, ut alii vertunt) iniquitas tua coram facie mea, dicit Dominus Jehova.

We have already seen, and the Prophet will often repeat the same thing, — that the people were become so refractory that they would not willingly give way to any reproofs; for they were almost all of such a hard front, and so obdurate in their wickedness, that they dared insolently to raise objections against the prophets; whenever they severely reproved them: "What! Are not we God's holy people? Has he not chosen us? Are we not the holy seed of Abraham?" It was therefore necessary for the prophets to apply a hard wedge to a hard knot, as they commonly say. As, then, the Israelites were like a knotty wood, it was necessary to strike hard their obstinacy.

On this account Jeremiah now says, *Even if thou wert to wash thyself with nitre, and multiply to thee borith, yet thine iniquity would be before me marked;* that is, "Ye effect nothing when ye set forth various pretences for the sake of excusing your impiety: wash yourselves, but your iniquity remains marked before me." The Prophet speaks in the person of God, that he might add more weight to the denunciation he pronounced on the Israelites, and by which he reduced to nothing their self — flatteries, according to what has been already stated.

By nitre and borith they removed stains in cloth; and hence borith is often mentioned in connection with fullers. But there is no need of a laborious inquiry, whether it was an herb or dust, or something of that kind; for as to what is meant, it is generally agreed that the Prophet teaches us by this metaphor, — that hypocrites gain nothing by setting up their pretences, that they may escape, when God condemns them. Hence he says, that all their attempts would be vain and fruitless. How so? Because their iniquity remained unwashed; that is, because they could not remove by washing what is imprinted. Spots or stains can indeed be cleansed or washed away by soap

``thou hast declined from my fear,'' by the Targum Blarney takes it as a verb in the imperative mood, and renders the two lines thus, --- Yet how I find thee changed! Depart, O vine of spurious growth. But there is a harshness and incongruity in this version that renders it inadmissible. Besides ``vine of spurious growth'' is not the meaning of the words used, for it is ``a foreign vine,'' that is, a heathen vine; which contains an allusion to the idolatry which had been imported from heathen nations. It is most probable that ,{סורי} or in full, ,{סוריים} means degenerate shoots or branches, as Parkhurst thinks. To turn aside, to decline, to degenerate, seems to be the most common meaning of the verb. There would in this case be a congruity in the whole verse, --- And I myself had planted thee a choice vine, The whole of it a genuine plant; How then art thou become to me The degenerate shoots of a foreign vine? The plant was of the best kind, but the shoots or the branches had become degenerated, such as a foreign or heathen vine produced. --- Ed.

or other things; but when the stain is inward, and imprinted within, washing will avail nothing, for the marks are so deep that some more efficacious remedy must be adopted. So now the Prophet says, that the stains were imprinted, and therefore could not be washed away or cleansed by soap or borith. [52]

But the Prophet says, that the *stains were marked,* or stamped, *before* God; for it was a common thing with the Israelites to clear themselves from every blame; nay, so great was their audacity, that they openly opposed the prophets, as though some great wrong was done to them; and they called the prophets accusers and slanderers, Hence he says, *Thine iniquity is stamped before me?* [53] that is, "However thou mayest by self — flatteries deceive thyself, and hidest thy sins before the world, yet thou gainest nothing; for in my sight thine iniquity ever remains *stamped*." He afterwards adds —

Jeremiah 2:23

23. How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done: thou art a swift dromedary traversing her ways;

23. Quomodo dices (hoc est, quomodo dicis; nam futurum tempus saepe accipitur apud Hebraeos pro acu continuo, quomodo igitur dicis) non sum polluta, post Baalim non profecta sum? Vide vias tuas in valle, cognosce quid feceris dromedaria velox corripiens vias suas (vel, circumiens, nam deducitur vox ista a corrigia calceamenti).

Jeremiah goes on here with his reproof, and dissipates the clouds of hypocrites, under which they thought themselves to be sufficiently concealed: for hypocrites, when they allege their fallacious pretences, think themselves already hidden from the eyes of God and from the judgment of all men. Hence the Prophet here sharply condemns this supine self — security, and says, How darest thou to boast that thou art *not polluted?* How darest thou to say, that thou hast *not walked after Baalim?* that is, after strange gods. I have already said, that by this word were meant inferior gods: for though the Jews acknowledged one Supreme Being, yet they sought for themselves patrons; and hence arose, as it is usual, a great number of gods. The superstitious never lapsed into that degree of impiety and madness, but that they ever confessed that there is some supreme Deity; but they added some inferior gods. And thus they had their Baalim and patrons, like the Papists, who call their patrons saints, for they dare not in their delusions to call them

[52] What we call "nitre" is different from the "nitron" here mentioned. The verb, from which the noun is derived, means to loosen, to set free: and hence the article called nitron dissolves in water, and loosens and washes away spots and stains. Borith was an herb, which, being burnt, and its ashes dissolved in water, had a strong cleansing power. — Ed.

[53] The verb rendered "stamped" is only found here in Niphel, but, as a participial noun, it seems to mean gold stamped or marked to shew its genuineness. See Psalm 45:9; Proverbs 25:12. A stain or spot is not what it signifies, as given by the Septuagint and the Vulgate, nor "blot," according to Blarney; but it refers to the stamp or mark imprinted on a hard metal, such as gold: and this idea alone corresponds with the other parts of the verse. A stain, a spot, or a blot, might be cleansed by abstergents, but not a mark stamped on a metal, — But thou washest thyself with nitron, And multipliest for thyself fuller's ashes: Stamped is thine iniquity before me, Saith the Lord Jehovah. — Ed.

gods. Such was the sophistry of the Jews.

How then, he says, canst thou excuse thyself, and say, that thou hast *not walked after Baalim? See,* he adds, *thy ways, see what thou hast done in the valley,* and *know* at length that thou hast been like a *swift dromedary* The Prophet could not have fully expressed the furious passions which then raged in the Jews without comparing them to dromedaries: and as he addresses the people in the feminine gender, the female dromedary is mentioned. I consider that she is called swift, not only on account of the celerity of her course, but on account of her impetuous lust, as we shall presently see.

Now this passage teaches us, that the people had become so hardened, that they insolently rejected all reproofs given them by the prophets. Their impiety was openly manifest, and yet they ever dared to allege excuses, for the purpose of shewing that the prophets unjustly condemned them. Nor are we to wonder that such contumacy prevailed in that ancient people, since at this day we find that the Papists, with no less perverseness, resist the clear light of truth. For however gross and shameful their idolatry appears, they yet think that they evade the charge by merely saying, that their statues and images are not idols, and that the people of Israel were, indeed, condemned for inventing statues for themselves, but that they did this, because they were prone to superstition. Hence they cry against us, and say, that the worship which prevails among them is unjustly calumniated. We see, and even children know, that under the Papacy every kind of superstition prevails; and yet they seek to appear innocent, and free from every blame. The same was the case formerly: and as the temple continued, and the people offered sacrifices there, and as some kind of religion remained, whenever the prophets reproved the impious corruptions, which were blended with and vitiated the pure worship of God, and which were called adulteries, as they everywhere declare, "What!" they said, "Do we not worship God?" This very perverseness is what the Prophet now condemns by saying, *How* darest thou to *say, I am not polluted, I have not walked after Baalim?* So the Papists say at this day, "Do we not believe in one God? Have we devised for ourselves various gods? Yet they rob God of all his power, and dishonor him in a thousand ways: and at the same time they assert against us, with a meretricious mouth and an iron front, that they worship the one true God. [54] The case was exactly the same with the Jews: but the Prophet here proves their boasting to be vain and grossly false, *See*, he says, *thy ways in the valley; see what thou, a swift dromedary, hast done* As they could not be overcome by reasons, their willfulness being so great, the Prophet compares them to wild animals: "Ye are," he says, "like lascivious dromedaries, which are so carried away by lust, that they forget everything while pursuing their

[54] "The Jews, it seems," says Loath, "had found out distinctions, whereby to reconcile the worship of the true God with those religious rites which they paid to the deities of the heathen, called here Baalim. These, they pretended, were only inferior demons or spirits, or the souls of men departed, and might be worshipped in subordination to the supreme God." Scott adds to this quotation this just remark, "This, and nothing better, can the Papists urge in excuse of their manifest idolatry in worshipping saints and angels" — Ed.

own courses." It follows —

Jeremiah 2:24

24. A wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away? all they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they shall find her.

24. Onager (sed adhuc retinet foemineum genus, foemina igitur onagri) assueta deserto, in appetitu animae sum (hoc est, pro desiderio, vel, cupidine animae suae colligens ventura occasionis suae (vel, occursus sui) quis inde reducet eam? Quisquis persequitur earn non fatigabitur, in mense suo inveniet eam.

As Jeremiah had called the people a dromedary, so he now calls them a wild ass: "Thou," he says, "art both a dromedary and a wild ass." For when a wild ass has caught the wind according to her desire, that is, when she has pantingly sought it, and has caught the wind of her occasion, that is, such as may chance to be; for he meant to shew, by this expression, that there is no choice made by beasts, no judgment shewn, no moderation exercised; — when, therefore, she has *caught the wind,* wherever chance may take her, no one can *restrain her from her impetuous course;* and he who pursues her will *in vain fatigue himself, until he finds her in her month*

By these words the Prophet intimates the untamable madness of the people, that they could not by any means be restrained, being like a wild ass, which cannot be tamed nor divested of its wildness, especially when she has caught the wind. For were she shut in, bolts might do something, so as to prevent her headlong course: but when a wild ass is free, and allowed to ramble over hill and dale, when she catches the wind, and catches it according to her desire; that is, when she can wander here and there, and nothing prevents her from rambling in all directions, — when such a liberty is allowed to wild animals that they catch the wind, and the wind of occasion; that is, any wind that may chance to be, there is no reason, as the Prophet seems to intimate, in wild beasts, nor do they keep within any due bounds. When any one of us undertakes a journey, he inquires how far he can go in one day, he avoids weariness, and provides against it as far as he can, and after having fixed the extent of his journey, he thinks of a resting — place; and he also makes inquiries as to the right way, and the best road. The case is different with wild animals; for when they begin to run, they go not to Lyons or to Lausanne, but abandon themselves to a blind impulse: and then when they are fatigued, they cease not to proceed in their course, for lust hurries them on. We now perceive the design of the Prophet.

He then adds, *Who can bring her back?* As though he had said, that the people could not be stopped or brought back to anything like moderation, for a wildness, yea rather a complete madness, had taken an entire possession of them. [55]

[55] The grammatical anomalies at the beginning of this verse are satisfactorily removed by Parkhurst, and what he has proposed is approved by Horsley. He considers {{פרה to be the female dromedary, he derives {למד} from ,{מד} measure, or extent, with a {ל} prefixed, and regards {נפשה} as the true reading, being

It afterwards follows, *There is no reason for any one to weary himself, he will at length find her in her month* All interpreters agree that this month is to be taken for the time of foaling. When the wild asses are in foal, and the time of parturition draws nigh, they are then restrained by their burden, and may be easily caught, as they retain not their previous swiftness, for they carry a burden. The Prophet then says, that the people were like wild asses, for they could be restrained by no instruction, and nothing could bridle their excesses; but that the time of parturition must be waited for.

Let us now see how this similitude applies to the people. The verse contains two parts. The first shews, as I have already said, that the people could not be turned by any warnings, nor would they obey any counsels, but were carried away by their insane passions, as it were by the wind of occasion, or any wind that might blow. This is the first part. Now as the obstinacy of the people was so great, God here declares to hypocrites, that the time would come when he would put a restraint on them, and break down their impetuous infatuation. How? The time of parturition would come; that is, "when ye shall have done many iniquities, your burden will stop and restrain you." And he intimates, that it would be the time of his judgment; as though he had said, "you must be dealt with not as sane men, endued with a sound mind; for ye are wild beasts which cannot be tamed." What, then, remains to be done? As the wild ass is weighed down with her burden when the time of parturition approaches, so I will cause you at length to feel the burden of your iniquities, which will be by its weight intolerable; and though your perverseness is untamable, yet my hand will be sufficient to restrain you; for I shall break you down, as ye will not bend nor obey my instruction." We now, then, understand the import of the similitude, and how applicable it was to the case of the people; the use of which ought to be learnt, also, by us in the present day. The rest tomorrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that, as it pleased thee, when thou didst deliver us from the tyranny of Satan, to lay on our necks thy yoke: — O grant, that we may be influenced by the spirit of docility, and of obedience, and of meekness, and willingly submit ourselves to thee through the whole course of our life, so that thou mayest gather from us the fruit of thy redemption: and may we so renounce sin that we may devote ourselves to thy service, and become the servants of righteousness, until having finished the course of our warfare, we shall be gathered into that blessed rest. which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only — begotten Son. — Amen.

that of the Keri, and of the largest number of MSS. This verse and the preceding are to be thus connected, --- 23. How canst thou say, ``I have not been polluted, After Baalim have I not walked!'' See thy way in the valley, Know what thou hast done, --- Like a swift dromedary which winds about her courses, --- 24. A female which, in the wide space of the wilderness, Through the desire of her natural instinct, Snuffs up the wind she meets with: Who can turn her back? All who seek her, Let them not weary themselves; In her month they shall find her. By ``winding about her courses,'' or tracks, or ways, is meant running in this and in that direction, and not in a straight course. The word, as a noun, denotes the string or latchet by which the ancients fastened their sandals, and which they twined round the feet. ``The wind she meets with,'' is literally, ``the wind of her meeting.'' The Septuagint and the early versions have departed widely from the original; the Vulgate comes nearest to it; nor is the Targum far off --- Ed.

Lecture Eighth

Jeremiah 2:25

25. Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst: but thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.

25. Prohibe pedem tuum a discalceare (hoc est, ne discalceeris) et guttur tuum a siti (quanquam alii existimant esse nomen substantivum {יחף}, et mihi placet; ita vertendum erit, Prohibe pedem tuum a discalceatione et guttur tuum a siti;) et dixisti, Acturm est; non, quia dilexi alienos, et post illos ambulabo.

The words of the Prophet, as they are concise, may appear at the first view obscure: but his meaning is simply this, — that the insane people could by no means be reformed, however much God might try to check that excess by which they were led away after idols and superstitions. In the first clause, God relates how he had dealt with the people. All the addresses of the prophets had this as their object — to make the people to rest contented under the protection of God. But he employs other words here, *Keep thy foot,* he says, *from unshodding, and thy throat from thirst* For whenever there was any danger they ran, now to Egypt, then to Assyria, as we have already seen. Hence God complains of their madness, because they obeyed not his wise and salutary counsels. Had God bidden them to run here and there, either to the east or to the west, they might have raised an objection, and say, that the journey would be irksome to them; but he only commanded them to remain still and quiet. How great, then, was their madness, that they would not with quietness wait for the help of God, but weary themselves, and that with no benefit? Isaiah says nearly the same thing, but in other words; for he expostulated with them, because they underwent every kind of weariness, when they might have been protected by God, and be in no way wearied.

We now, then, comprehend the design of the Prophet: for God first shews that the people had been admonished, and that in time; but that they were so taken up with their own perverse counsels, that they could not endure the words of the prophets. It was the highest ingratitude in them, that they refused to remain quiet at home, but preferred to undergo great and severe labors without any advantage, according to what is said by Isaiah in another place,

"This is your rest, but ye would not." (Isaiah 30:15.)

There is no one who desires not rest and peace; nay, all confess that it is the chief good, which all naturally seek. The Prophet says now, that it was rejected by the people of Israel. It hence follows, that they were wholly insane, for they had lost a desire which is by nature implanted in all men. The Prophet, then, does not here simply teach, but reminds the Jews of what they had before heard from Isaiah, and also from Micah, and from all the other prophets. For God had often exhorted them to remain quiet; and the Prophet now upbraids them with ingratitude, because they gave way to

their own mad folly, and rejected the singular benefit offered them by God.

Let us then know that the Prophet states here what others before him had taught, *Keep back,* he says, *thy foot from unshodding.* Some render the last word, "from nakedness," because they wore out their shoes by long journeys; but this I think must be understood of what was commonly done, for they were wont to make journeys unshod: *keep* then *thy foot from being unshod,* [56] *and thy throat from thirst* We know that thirst is very grievous to men: hence the Prophet here reproves the madness of the people, — that they were so seized with the ardor of an impious passion, that they willfully exposed themselves to thirst even by long journeys. As then God required nothing from the people but to ask his counsel, their sin was doubled by their unwillingness to obey his salutary direction. A plausible excuse, as I have already said, might have been alleged, had God dealt in a hard and severe manner with the people; but as he was ready kindly and graciously to preserve them in a complete state of quietness, no kind of excuse remained for them.

It then follows, *Thou hast said, There is not a hope, no* The Prophet shews here, as to the people, how perverse they were; for they obstinately rejected the kind and friendly admonitions which had been given them. They say first, *There is not a hope,* or, it is all over; for {יאש} *iash,* in *Niphal,* means to despair, or, to be out of hope. It may be rendered, "It is weariness;" and this would not be unsuitable, if taken in this sense, "I have thoughtlessly tormented myself more than enough, so that weariness itself induces me to rest." *No.* The Prophet speaks concisely in order to express more strikingly the refractory conduct of the people. By saying, "There is not a hope," it is the same as though he had said, that they spurned all exhortations; and then he adds, *No.* There is no verb put here; but an elliptical expression, as I have said, is more forcible to set forth the ferocity of the people. [57]

Isaiah expostulated with them in another way, and blamed them, because they did not say, "There is not a hope." (Isaiah 57:10.) Thus Isaiah and Jeremiah seem to be inconsistent; for our Prophet here reproves the people for saying, "There is not a hope;" and Isaiah, for not having said so. But when the Jews expressly answered, according to this passage, "There is not a

[56] That the word means to be barefooted, or without shoes, is clear from Isaiah 20:2-4, and also from 2 Samuel 15:30: and it is nowhere else found except here. It being here a noun, it signifies literally barefootedness. They are here exhorted not to travel for aid to foreign lands, so as to wear out their shoes and thus become barefooted. This was said in contempt, in order to pour ridicule on their folly in seeking foreign aid. — Ed.

[57] It has been disputed whether the negative "no," refers to the advice given at the beginning of the verse, or to the immediately preceding word. The latter is the most natural. The word {{נואש is a participle, as in Job 6:26. The verse may be thus rendered, --- 25. Keep thy foot from being bare And thy throat from thirst; But thou hast said, ``Hopeless! No; For I have loved strangers, And after them will I go.'' The first part implies that they were pursuing a useless course. The insolent answer was, ``Is it hopeless? By no means.'' The Septuagint omit the negative, and have only ``{ἀνδριοῦμαι} --- I will act manfully;'' and this version has been followed by the Syriac and Arabic The Vulgate has, ``desperavi, nequaquam faciam --- I have despaired, I will by no means do so.'' The most literal rendering is given above, and affords the best and the most suitable meaning. To confess that it was a hopeless thing to attempt to reform them, is not so appropriate, as to deny it to be hopeless to have recourse to foreign alliances: which seems to be the import of the passage. This is the view which Gataker seemed most inclined to take; and he mentions this rendering, ``Should I despair? No.'' To the same purpose is the version of Jun. and Trem. But Grotius, Henry, and Adam Clarke, agree with the explanation of Calvin. --- Ed.

hope," they meant that the prophets spent their labor in vain, as they were determined to follow their own course to the last. Hence by this expression, "There is not a hope," is set forth the extreme perverseness of the people; and he shews that no hope of repentance remained, since they said openly and without any evasion that it was all over. But Isaiah reproved the people for not saying, that there was not a hope, because they did not acknowledge after long experience that they were proved guilty of folly: for after having often run to Egypt and then to Assyria, and the Lord having really taught them how ill-advised they had been, they ought to have learnt from their very disappointments, that the Lord had frustrated their expectations in order to lead them to repentance. Justly then does Isaiah say, that the people were extremely besotted, because they ever went on in their blind obstinacy, and never perceived that God did set many obstacles in their way, in order to compel them to go back and to cast aside all their vain hopes, by which they deceived themselves. We hence see that there is a complete agreement between the two prophets, though their mode of speaking is different.

Jeremiah then introduces the people here as saying expressly, and thus avowing their own perverseness, *There is not a hope;* as though they said, "Ye prophets do not cease to stun our ears, but vain and useless is your labor; for we have once for all made up our minds, and we can never be brought to revoke our resolution." But what does Isaiah say? He reproves the madness of the people, that having been so often deceived by the Egyptians as well as by the Assyrians, they did not understand that they ought by such trials and experiments to have been brought back to the right way, but continued obstinately to follow their own wicked counsels. As to the passage before, we perceive what the Prophet means, — that God had kindly exhorted the Jews to rest quiet and dependent on his aid; but that they were not only stiff-necked, but also insolently rejected the kindness offered to them.

It then follows, *For I have loved strangers, and after them will I go* Here he exaggerates the sin of the people, for they gave themselves up to strangers; and he retains the similitude which we have already observed. For as God had taken the people under his own protection, so the obligation was mutual: both parties were connected together as by a sacred bond, as the case is between a husband and his wife; as he pledges his faith to her, so she by the law of marriage is bound to him. Jeremiah here retains this similitude, and says that the people were like the basest strumpet, for they would not hear the voice of their husband, though he was willing and anxious to be reconciled to them. Now, a wife must be wholly irreclaimable when she spurns her own husband, who is ready to receive her into favor, and to forgive her all the wickedness she may have done. The Prophet then shews, that there was in the people so great and so hopeless an impiety, that they closed their ears against God who kindly exhorted them to repent; and worse still, they shamelessly boasted that they were resolved to worship idols and their own fictions, and to reject the only true God. It follows —

Jeremiah 2:26

26. As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets,

26. Sicut pudor (vel, probrum) furi, cum deprehensus est, ita pudefacti sunt domus Israel, reges eorum, principes eorum, et sacerdotes eorum et prophetae eorum.

Some render the words in the future tense, "So ashamed shall be the house of Israel," etc.; and they think that the Prophet is speaking here of the punishment which was impending over the people: but I explain the words as they are, — that the impiety of the people was so gross, that there was no need formally to prove it, as it was so very palpable. Hence the Prophet compares the Jews to open thieves, as though he had said, that hypocrites among that people gained nothing by their evasions and subterfuges, for their impiety was quite public: they were like a thief when caught, who cannot deny nor hide his crime. Hence he says that they were caught, as they say, in the very act; that is, their flagitious deeds were so conspicuous, that whatever objections they might raise, they could not clear themselves, but their baseness was known to all. We now then perceive what the Prophet means. We have before seen that the people had recourse to many excuses, but Jeremiah shews here, that they attained nothing by their evasions, except that they more fully discovered their own effrontery, for their dishonesty was evident to all; it was so manifest that they could not cover it by any cloaks and pretences. [58]

Nor does he speak only of the common people; but he condemns *kings, princes, priests,* and *prophets,* as though he had said, that they were become so corrupt from the least to the greatest, that having cast off all shame, they openly shewed a manifest and gross contempt for God by following their own inventions and superstitions. And yet the Jews no doubt attempted by many excuses to defend themselves; but God here shakes off all those fallacious pretexts, by which they thought to cover their flagitious deeds, and says that they were notwithstanding manifestly thieves.

[58] The verb rendered "is ashamed," is in the past tense in Huphal, and means "made ashamed," or, "confounded," as rendered, by the Targum and the Vulgate. The Septuagint have converted it into the future tense, and so have the Syriac and the Arabic, which have been followed by most modern versions, and by commentators. If we rightly view the whole passage, we shall see reason to take this verb as we find it, in the past tense. The verse is an answer, as it were, to what is contained in the latter part of the previous verse, by a reference to what had already taken place as to the people of Judah; and the 30th verse (Jeremiah 2:30) countenances the past tense. This and the following verse may be thus rendered, — 26. As a thief is ashamed when he is found out, So made ashamed have been the house of Israel, They, their kings, their princes, Their priests and their prophets; 27. Who have said to the wood, "My father art thou," And to the stone, "Thou hast begotten me." Though they have turned to me the back and not the face; Yet in the time of their calamity, They say, "Arise and save us." The participles in Hebrew are regulated as to their tense by the verbs in the passage. Hence {{אמרים in Jeremiah 2:27, is to be in the same tense with the previous verb. The future in the last line is to be in the present, as it expresses what was commonly done. Then what was usually said to them is mentioned in the following verse, --- 28. But where are thy gods, which thou hast made for thyself? Let them arise, if they can save thee In the time of thy calamity: For according to the number of thy cities Have been thy gods, O Judah. Blayney has kept to the past tense as to the last line, and also as to the beginning of Jeremiah 2:26. --- Ed.

The Prophet had said before, that the Jews made a different declaration; and now he condemns their effrontery: but there is no inconsistency as to the meaning. The Jews denied that they were apostates and guilty of perfidy, or that they had forsaken the worship of God; they denied this in words; but the Prophet, in now proclaiming their shamelessness, does not refer to words; for they had ready at hand their false pretensions, as it has been already stated: but the Prophet now takes the fact itself as granted, and says that they wickedly and perversely resisted God, so that their wickedness and obstinacy were past all remedy. It now follows —

Jeremiah 2:27-28

27. Saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us.

27. Dicentes ligno, Pater meus tu (hoc est, tu es pater meus,) et lapidi, Tu genuisti me (si legamuss per {ו}, si autem per {ו}, Tu genuisti nos;) quia verterunt mihi cervicem (dorsum, alii vertunt, vel, posteriora,) et non faciem: in tempore autem calamitatis suae dicent (hoc est, dicunt,) Surge et serva nos.

28. But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah.

28. Et ubi sunt dii tui, quos fecisti tibi? Surgant, an servent to tempore mali tui (hoc est, afflictionis tuae, sicuti prius;) quia secundum numerum urbium tuarum fuerunt dii tui, Jehudah.

The Prophet here confirms what he had before said of the perverse wickedness of the people. He shews that he had not said without reason, that their sins were extremely gross, and could not be excused by any evasions: for they *say*, he adds, *to the wood, Thou art my father, and to the stone, Thou hast begotten, me* By these words the Prophet shews, that idolatry was so rampant among the people, that they openly ascribed to their statues, made of wood or stone, the honor due to the only true God.

But the Prophet points out here what is especially to be detested in idolatry, and that is, the transferring of the honor, due to God, to statues, not only as to the external act by bending the knee before them, but by seeking salvation from them.

And this is what we ought particularly to notice: for the Papists at this day, though they prostrate themselves before their pictures and statues, do not yet acknowledge themselves guilty of idolatry, when such a charge is brought against them. They say that they worship the statues, not with the honor due to God, but with such honor as a servant renders to his master. [59] They think that they thus exculpate themselves. But were we to

[59] The words employed by Calvin are the technical terms, latria and dulia, the fictions of the Papists. The first means specifically worship, and the second, service, obedience. The verb {δουλεύω} in the New Testament is never used in the sense of worshipping or adoring, but of serving and obeying: but to bow to images or to kiss them, is an act of adoration, and not of service. --- Ed

grant what they allege, they yet cannot deny but that they address prayers and supplications to statues. As then they ask the very statues to save them, whatever sophistry they may adopt, it is altogether nugatory: for the prophets condemn not merely the outward gesture, the bowing down, and other ceremonious acts, as they are called, when they condemned idolaters. What then? They condemned them, because they said to *statues, Thou art my Father;* that is, because they ascribed the power, which belongs only to God, to statues made of wood or stone. It is indeed certain, that the Jews never sunk into so great a depth of sottishness as expressly to profess that gods of wood and stone were equal to the true God, and they never said any such thing. Yet the Prophet did not calumniate them, in ascribing what is here said to them: but as it is clearly evident from other places, the Prophet regarded their thoughts rather than their words: for the Jews professed the same thing as the Papists of the present day, when they prostrated themselves before their statues; they said that they worshipped the only true God and sought salvation from him; and yet they thought that the power of God was inherent in the statues themselves: hence they said, *Thou art my father, Thou hast begotten me* The case is the same with the Papists of the present day. When any one prostrates himself before the statue of Catherine or of Christopher, he says, "Our Father." When he justifies himself in doing this, he says that it is done in honor to the one true God: and yet thou runnest blindly, now to one statue, and then to another, and muttcrest, "Our Father." There is not the least doubt but that the superstition which now prevails under the Papacy, is even more gross than that which prevailed among the Jews. But to say nothing of the Papists, because they mutter, "Our Father," before their statues, there is no doubt but that when they present their prayers to statues, they consider God's power to be in them.

We must now, then, bear in mind, that the Jews were not only condemned, because they burnt incense and offered sacrifices to idols, but because they transferred the glory of God to their statues, when they asked salvation from them. And as this was not done in express words, the Prophet here brings to light their impious thoughts; for they did not raise up their minds and thoughts to God, but turned them to their statues.

It afterwards follows, *They have turned to me the neck* [60] *and not the face* In these words, God again confirms what he had before said, that the apostasy or defection of the people was more manifest than what could be disguised by any colorings. He then adds, *Yet* (the {ו} is to be taken here adversatively) *in the time of their affliction, they will say, Arise, and save us* God here complains that the Jews most strangely abused his kindness;

[60] The "neck" here means evidently the hinder part, for it is in contrast with "face;" and the word generally means the hinder part. Hence it is properly rendered here "back" in our version and by Blayney, and so by the Targum and the early versions, except the Syriac, which retains the hinder part of the neck. We have no single word, except it be nape, which denotes the back part of the neck. There is one in Welsh, "gwegil," and so in Latin, "cervix," and in Greek, {ἀυχὴν} But the Septuagint have adopted here ``{νῶτα} --- backs.'' --- Ed

for they came to him when any grievous calamity constrained them. "What have I to do with you?" he says, "Ye are wholly devoted to your idols, ye call them your fathers, and ascribe to them the glory of your salvation, when things go on peaceably with you; but when your idols in time of distress give you no aid, then ye return to me and say, *Arise, and save us;* but, since idols are your fathers, and ye expect salvation from them, I shall have nothing to do with you; be contented with your idols, and trouble me no more, for I have been forsaken by you."

And hence he adds, *Where are your gods?* Here God laughs to scorn the false confidence by which the Jews deceived themselves: *Where are your gods, which you have made for yourselves? Let them arise, let us see whether they will help you in the time of your distress.* We now understand what the Prophet means: for he shews that the people acted in a most strange manner; for they worshipped idols when they were in safety, and afterwards would have God to be bound to them; and yet they denied the true God when they fell away unto idols. He then shews that they could expect no aid from God; for they robbed him of his own power when they devised idols for themselves. But we must ever remember what he said, that false gods were counted as fathers and authors of salvation by the people.

The same thing is, no doubt, done at this day under the Papacy; for the Papists have their patrons; and when they find that their foolish superstitions can do nothing for them, they would have God to help them, and yet they leave nothing to him: after having taken away all his glory, and divided it as a spoil among dead saints, they would then have God to be their helper. But we see what God's answer to them is, "Where are your gods?" etc.

Now this truth is of use to us; and we hence learn, that we are not to wait until we are really, and in the last state of despair, compelled to acknowledge that our labors have been useless, while we hoped and prayed for help from idols; but that we ought to come directly to God himself for aid in our distress.

God proceeds farther with the sarcasm or the derision which he has employed, *Where are thy gods? Let them now arise that they may help thee;* that is, — let them try their utmost whether they can aid thee. *According to the number of thy cities have been thy gods, O Judah* As the people were not satisfied with one God, every city chose a patron for itself. "Since, then, innumerable gods are invoked by you, how comes it that they do not help you?" We hence see that the unbelief of the people is here sharply reproved; for they did not acquiesce in God alone, but sought to procure for themselves gods without number: there were many cities in the tribe of Judah, and there were as many patrons. The one true God would have been fully sufficient for them, and would have brought them complete deliverance whenever needed; but the one true God they despised, and every city devised a god for itself. "Since ye trust," he says, "in such a multitude, *let them now arise, that they may succor you;* for I, who am one, am despised by you."

We now understand what the Prophet means also in this part. It afterwards follows —

Jeremiah 2:29

29. Wherefore will ye plead with me? ye all have transgressed against me, saith the LORD.

29. Cur litigatis mecum omnes impie agentes in me (vel, perfide)? dicit Jehova.

Jeremiah concludes here his previous subject: he says that the Jews gained nothing by alleging against God that they were innocent, and by thinking that they could by mere words escape his judgment, and not only by doing so, but also by hurrying on to such a degree of presumption as to challenge God himself, and to seek to prove him guilty. But God answers them in one word, and says, that they were perfidious. The meaning then is, that the Jews ill consulted their own interest in hardening themselves in their obduracy; for God would hold them fully convicted of impiety, so that they in vain alleged this or that as an excuse. [61]

Now this passage deserves especial notice: for we know how prone we are by nature to hypocrisy; and when God summons us to his tribunal, hardly one in a hundred will acknowledge his guilt and humbly pray for forgiveness; but the greater part complains, nay almost all murmur against God, and still more, they gather boldness, and proudly dare to challenge and defy God. Since, then, hypocrisy thus prevails in us and is deeply fixed in the hearts of almost all, and since hypocrisy generates insolence and pride against God, let us remember what the Prophet says here, — that all who dispute against God gain nothing by their excuses, because he will at length detect their defection and perfidy. It then follows —

Jeremiah 2:30

30. In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion.

30. Frustra (vel, in vanum) castigavi filios tuos, correctionem non receperunt; voravit gladius vester prophetas vestros quasi leo vastator.

Some expound the beginning of this verse as though the meaning were, — that God chastised the Jews on account of their folly, because they habituated themselves to falsehoods: but the latter clause does not correspond. There is therefore no doubt but that God here expostulates with the Jews, because he had tried to bring them to the right way and found them wholly irreclaimable. A similar expostulation is found in Isaiah,

[61] The verb rendered "plead" in our version, is followed by {,אל against or in opposition to. There are two other instances, Judges 21:22; Job 33:13. Our version in Job is, ``Why dost thou strive against him?'' The most suitable rendering of this passage is, Why should ye contend against (or, with) me? Then follows a fact sufficient to put an end to all contention, --- All of you have rebelled against me, Saith Jehovah. The primary idea of {פשע} is, to go, to pass, to march on. See Isaiah 28:4. Its meaning depends on the preposition which follows it. Followed by ,{על} over, it means to transgress, it being a going or passing over the limits set by the law, Hosea 8:1, --- by ,{מ} to go from, to revolt, to apostatize, 2 Kings 8:22,-and by ,{ב} to go against, to rebel, as in this passage. Hence the noun has attained various meanings-transgression, apostasy, and rebellion. Its precise meaning in any case is to be determined by the context. Gataker and Blayhey render the verb here the same, --- All of you have rebelled against me, saith Jehovah. The early versions vary. The Septuagint have ``{ἠσεβήσατε} --- ye have acted impiously,'' the Syriac, ``ye have denied me,'' --- the Arabic, ``ye have sinned against me,''-and the Vulgate, ``ye have forsaken me.'' The general idea is the same, but the specific one is that of rebelling against God. --- Ed

"In vain," he says, "have I chastised you; for from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head there is no soundness."
(Isaiah 1:6)

There God shews that he had tried every remedy, but that the Jews, being wholly refractory in their spirit, were wholly incurable. Jeremiah speaks now on the same subject: and God thus exaggerates the wickedness of the people; for he testifies that he had tried whether they would be taught, not only by words, but also by scourges and chastisements, but that his labor in both instances had been in vain. He spoke before of teaching, "Keep thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst." The Prophets, then, had exhorted the Jews by God's command to rest quietly. This teaching had been useless and unfruitful. God now adds, that he had tried in another way to bring them back to a right mind; but this effort had been also useless and in vain: *In vain have I chastised you; for ye have not received correction*

But he speaks of *children,* in order to shew that the whole people were unteachable: for though lusts boil more in youth, yet their obduracy is not so great as in the old; as he who has through his whole life hardened himself in the contempt of God, can hardly be ever healed and be amended by correction; for old age is of itself morose and difficult to be pleased, and the old also think, that wrong is in a manner done them when they are reproved: but when the insolence and obduracy of the young are so great that they reject all correction, it is more strange and monstrous. The Prophet then shews that there was nothing sound or right in that people, since their very children refused correction. [62]

We now perceive his object, — that, as God had sent his prophets, and as their labor availed nothing, he now shews, that not only the ears of the people had been deaf to wholesome teaching, but that they were hard — necked and untamable; for he had tried to correct them by scourges, but effected nothing. It follows, *their sword has devoured the prophets* But I cannot finish now.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou, in thy paternal kindness, daily invitest us to thyself, we may not harden ourselves against thy holy and salutary admonitions: and whenever thou chastisest us with scourges, may we not become obdurate against thee, but learn humbly to submit to thy word, and receive thy chastisement, and so profit by both, that we may not be exposed to the extreme judgment which thou denouncest on the obstinate; but may we, on the contrary, open a way for thy paternal goodness, so that thou mayest kindly deal with us, until thou receivest us into that blessed rest which has been prepared for us in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord. —

[62] Blayney renders the word "instruction." The Septuagint have "{παιδείαν} --- discipline: ``the Syriac, Vulgate, and the Targum are the same; but the Arabic has ``instruction --- eruditionem.'' The strict meaning of the word ,{מוסר} is restraint, check, discipline, correction. Not to receive restraint or correction, is not to be thereby improved or reformed, but to proceed in the same course, see Jeremiah 5:3. The word has also a secondary meaning, instruction, as the effect of correction, see Zephaniah 3:7. But here it clearly means correction. --- Ed

Amen.

Lecture Ninth

IN yesterday's lecture, God complained that he had spent labor in vain in chastising the children of Israel; for they were of a nature utterly untamable and refractory, incapable of being improved. Hence he says, "I have in vain endeavored by punishments to bring you back to the right way." But he now exaggerates their crime of obduracy, as they not only had rejected wholesome instruction, but had also shed innocent blood, and persecuted as their enemies the prophets who had been sent to them from above, in order to promote their wellbeing. God then condemns them here not only for perverseness, but also for cruelty; for he says, that he had not gained his object in leading them to repentance, and also, that they had not only been refractory and incorrigible, but that they had besides cruelly raged against the prophets: and Jerusalem, we know, had been a slaughter — house where many of the prophets had been killed.

Some explain the passage of false teachers, as though the Prophet had said, that it was to be ascribed to the wickedness of the people, that prophets, who were false and mendacious, suffered just punishment; and they lay hold on one word, even because they are called *their* prophets. Hence *Jerome* says, that they were said to be *your,* and not my prophets; as though God thus denied that he had given them any commission. But this view is forced and strained.

We must, then, understand the meaning to be what I have stated, — that when God used means to heal the vices of the people, the very prophets, the ministers of salvation, were cruelly slain by the people. And this exposition best suits the expressions which follow, *as a devouring lion* For God says, that the Jews raged against the prophets, as though they had entered a forest full of lions. It now follows —

Jeremiah 2:31

31. O generation, see ye the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?

31. Generatio, vos vidite verbum Jehovae, an deserturn fui Israel? an terra caliginis? Quare dixerunt populus meus (hoc est, dixit, sed plurali utitur, quia est nomen collectivum) dominati sumus (alii, recessimus,) non veniemus amplius ad to.

The prophet assumes the character, no doubt, of one in astonishment, that he might render the sin of the people more detestable: for he speaks as one astonished, *generation!* The word, {דור}, *dur;* as it is well known, means an age. It is then the same as if he had said, "On what time are we fallen? or in what an age do we now live?" We now then perceive the import of the word. Then he adds, *See ye the word of Jehovah* The word, *see,* seems not to be suitable; for he ought to have said, "Attend to, "or "hear." But he bids them to see, and most appropriate is the term; for he

does not require the people to hear, but, on the contrary, to know, as though he had said, "See ye yourselves what this is which the Lord declares." And he emphatically says, {אתם} *atem,* "ye yourselves." For the Jews might have been deservedly condemned by all nations, were they brought into judgment. But the Prophet shews, that however blind they were, they might see with their own eyes what the Lord now says. He does not refer to instruction, but to a fact, as though he had said, "The Lord by me expostulates with you; and though there should not be present any witnesses or a judge or an umpire, ye yourselves are able to understand and know the whole matter." We hence see how fitly the Prophet speaks, when he bids them to *see the word of Jehovah* [63]

For he immediately adds, *Have I been a desert to Israel?* He makes the Jews themselves the umpires and judges of the cause, whether they had not experienced the bounty of God and had forsaken him, according to his former complaint, when he said that God was the fountain of living waters, and that they had dug for themselves broken cisterns. Hence he says, "How has it happened that ye have departed from me? Have I in vain promised to be bountiful and kind to you? Did I disappoint you or your expectation, while ye served me? Since then I had not been to you a dark and a gloomy land, a land without the light of the sun; but as abundance of blessings had ever been found in me, how has it been that you have departed from me?"

He afterwards mentions another crime, Why has my people said, *We are lords* The verb {רדנו}, *redenu,* is variously explained by interpreters. Some derive it from {ידר}, *ired,* to descend, and think that the {י}, *iod*, is supplied by a point. But these differ in their views: some refer to the calamities with which the Jews had been visited, and others to their apostasy. The first give this explanation, "We have descended;" that is, "We have been oppressed with calamities, what then can we gain by calling on God, since our affairs are in so hopeless a state?" The second draw forth another meaning, "We have gone back;" that is, "There is no reason for the prophets to stun our ears by their clamors, for we have once for all resolved never to return to God; we have wholly renounced him; away with him, let him begone together with his exhortations, for we will not attend to them." Both these expounders

[63] The beginning of this verse literally is "The age, ye," that is, "Ye of this age," or generation. He was speaking before more especially of the preceding age. He now appeals to the people of that generation, — Ye of this age, see, spoken hath Jehovah, — Have I been a wilderness to Israel, Or a land of darkness? Why have they said, even my people, "We have ruled, we will no more come to thee?" The above rendering of the latter part of the first line is favored by the Septuagint, "Hear ye the word of the Lord; thus saith the Lord." The Arabic is the same. The Vulgate has, "See the word of the Lord," — and the Syriac, "Hear the word of the Lord." Blayney renders thus, "Behold ye the cause of Jehovah." Gataker takes "see" in the sense of considering, "See," or seriously consider, "the word of the Lord." The particle {{אם after ,{ה may be rendered ``or,'' as in the Syriac See Joshua 5:13. The word {מאפליה} is found in two MSS., ,{מאפילה} which seems to be the true reading, countenanced by the Targum, and all the early versions, except the Vulgate, which has ``serotina --- lateward.'' Darkness is a common metaphor for wretchedness and misery ``We have ruled'' is the literal rendering of ,{רדנו} and there is no other reading. The Septuagint gives the same meaning, though the form is different, ``We shall not be lorded over --- {οὐ} {κυριευθησόμεθα}.'' The Arabic is the same. It is the language of proud independence. The Targum, the Vulgate, and the Syriac have mistaken the verb for ,{ירדנו} which means, to descend, to come down, to bring down. Blayney gives the correct idea, ``We are our own masters, ``which Horsley approves. The preterite in Hebrew often includes the present; so the full meaning is, ``We have ruled and do rule.'' --- Ed

think it to be the language of despair: but we perceive how they differ; the first apply "descend" to the calamities of the people, and the second to their perfidy, because they had bidden adieu, as it were, to God, and wished not to have any farther intercourse with him.

But there are others who take the word more grammatically: for {רדה}, *rede,* and {רוד}, *rud,* signifies to be lord, or to rule. I therefore prefer the view of those who render the word, *We are lords* Some take the verb in a passive sense, but I know not for what reason: and the comment of others is very diluted, "We have kings and counselors." I consider it to be the language of pride and of vain boasting: for the Jews thought themselves to be kings, according to what Paul says of the Corinthians,

"Ye are rich, ye have reigned without us, and I would ye did reign." (1 Corinthians 4:8.)

The Corinthians, being inflated with pride on account of the opulence of their city, despised the simplicity of the Gospel; they looked for refined things, and were much addicted to novelties. Hence Paul, seeing that they despised the grace of God, ironically reproved them, and said, that they wished to be rich and to be kings without him, to whom yet as an instrument they owed everything. The same vice is what Jeremiah now condemns in that people, *We are lords, we will not come to thee;* as though he had said, "Your happiness has hitherto proceeded from me; for whatever you have been, and whatever has been given you, ought to be ascribed to me and to my bounty: but now without me (for God himself speaks) ye are kings, but by what right and by what title? What have you as your own? *Why then has my people said, We will come no more to thee?"* We now understand the real meaning of the Prophet.

As to the subject itself, he in the first place, as I have already said, is in a manner astonished at the wickedness of the people, as at something monstrous. Hence he exclaims, *O generation!* as though he had said, that what he saw was incredible. Then he immediately adds, *see ye yourselves the word of Jehovah,* This was much more severe, than if he had summoned them before God's tribunal; for he thus proved that their wickedness was extremely gross; for they had, without any cause, nay, without any pretext, and without shame, renounced God, who had been so bountiful towards them. He also in an indirect manner reproved them, because they refused to be instructed; for he commanded them to look on the fact itself, inasmuch as they were deaf, or having ears they closed them against all instruction; for, as we have said, he calls away their attention from the word to the fact itself, and this is what interpreters have not observed.

Then follows an upbraiding, — that *God had not been a desert to them;* but, as the Prophet had before shewed, abundance of all blessings had flowed to them so as fully to satisfy them. Since then God had enriched them through his blessing, their sin in departing from him was thereby more increased.

In the last part of the verse God expostulates with them on their ingratitude, because they thought themselves to be lords. They were indeed a royal priesthood, but it was through God's favor. They did not reign through their own right, they did not reign because they had attained power through their own valor or efforts, or through their own merits or their own good fortune; how then? only through the favor of another. Though then they were kings only on the condition of being subject to the supreme King, yet they wished to reign alone, that is, according to their own pleasure; and thus trod under their feet the favor of God. It is with this wickedness then that the Prophet charges them. And the end of the verse is of the same import, *we will come no more to thee;* as though they stood in no need of God's aid; for they thought that they could supply themselves with whatever was necessary to support them. As then they were inflated with much pride, they despised the favor of God, as though they stood in no need of the aid of another. It follows —

Jeremiah 2:32

32. Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

32. An obliviscetur puella ornamenti sui? Sponsa ligaminum suorum (ad verbum; alii vertunt, murenulas; alii, torques; sed nomen hoc deducitur a {קשר}, quod est ligare; apud nos possemus vertere tressures proprie?) populus autem meus (nam vau debet resolvi in adversativam particulam) oblitus est mei diebus innumeris (quibus non est numerus, ad verbum)

God here confirms what is said in the last verse, and would make his people ashamed, because they valued him less than girls are wont to value their ornaments. The necklaces of young women are indeed nothing but mere trifles, and yet we see that girls are so taken with them through a foolish passion, that they value such trinkets more than their very life. "How then is it, "says God, "that *my people have forgotten me?* Is there to be found any such ornament? Can anything be found among the most valuable jewels and the most precious stones which can be compared with me?"

God shews by this comparison how perverted the minds of the Jews were, when they renounced and rejected a benefit so invaluable as to have God as their Father, and to be prosperous under his dominion; for nothing necessary for a blessed life had been wanting to them as long as they continued the recipients of that paternal favor, which God had manifested towards them, and wished to shew to them to the end. As then they had found God to have been so bountiful, must they not have been more than mad, when they willfully rejected his favor? while yet young women commonly set their thoughts and affections strongly and permanently on such trifles as are of no value. [64] But the Prophet designedly used this similitude, that he might

[64] The second word, {,{כלה is rendered ``sponsa --- a bride,'' in our version, by Calvin and Blayney, and so by the Vulgate, Syriac, and the Targum, but by the Septuagint, ``{παρθένος} --- a virgin:'' and Parkhurst says that it never means a bride. The version then ought to be, --- Can a maid forget her ornaments, A virgin her bands? That the word {קשרים} means bands of some kind is evident, as the verb signifies to bind, to join closely. Bands or bandage for the breast --- {στηθοδεσμίδα},

introduce what is contained in the next verse: his object was to compare the Jews to adulterous women, who being led away by unbridled lust, follow wanton lovers. As then he intended to bring this charge against the Jews, he spoke expressly of the ornaments of young women; and hence it follows —

Jeremiah 2:33

33. Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways.

33. Cur bonificas (id est, paras, concinnas) vias tuas ad quaerendum amorem? itaque etiam pravitates docuisti in viis tuis.

This verse is differently explained: but the Prophet simply means; that the Jews were like lascivious women, who not only despise their husbands at home, but ramble here and there in all directions, and also paint their faces and seek for themselves all the charms of wantonness. He says that the Jews had acted in this way; and hence he says that they *made beautiful their ways* The verb in Hebrew has a wide meaning: it means to prepare, to conciliate favor. But its import here is, as though the Prophet had said, "Why dost thou disguise and paint thyself like strumpets, who use many artifices to allure young men and to inflame their lusts? why then dost thou undertake so much labor to gain a meretricious hire?" We shall hereafter see why he says this; for he upbraids them for applying to the Assyrians and the Egyptians.

It was a common thing with the Prophets to compare the people to lovers; for the Jews, while they ought to have been firmly attached to God, (like a chaste woman, who does not turn her eyes here and there, nor gad about, but has respect to her husband alone,) thought to seek safety now from the Assyrians, then from the Egyptians. This sinful disposition is then what the Prophet here condemns; and hence he speaks of them metaphorically as of an adulterous woman, who despises her husband and rambles after any she can find, and seeks wanton and silly young men in all places, and subjects herself to the gratification of all. We now then understand what the Prophet means.

The words must be noticed: he says, *Why makest thou fine thy ways?* But he refers here to the care which a wanton woman takes to adorn her person, as though he had said, "Why dost thou thus prepare thyself? and why dost thou seek for thyself what is splendid and elegant, that thy appearance may deceive the eyes of the simple?" For the Jews might have remained safe and secure under God's protection, and might have been so without any calamity. As a husband is content with the beauty of his wife, and seeks no adventitious and refined elegancies; so God required nothing from that people except fidelity, like a husband, who requires chastity in his wife. The meaning then is, — "As a wife, really attached to her husband, has no need

is the version of the Septuagint; the Arabic and the Vulgate are the same. Parkhurst considers that ``head-bands'' are meant. The word is found also in Isaiah 3:20; where the Septuagint render it ``{δακτυλίοις}-rings,'' and the Targum, ``murenulas --- chains,'' which were of gold, and worn around the neck. For any practical purpose it is only necessary to know that they were embellishments which young women delighted in: and women in every age are too fond of such things, and men too; but the case is introduced here only for the sake of illustration. --- Ed

to undergo much labor, for she knows that her own native beauty pleases him, nor does she labor much to gain the heart of her husband, for the best recommendation is her chastity; so ye might have lived without any trouble by only serving me and keeping my law: but now what is your chastity? ye are like wanton women, who labor to gain the hearts of adulterers; for as they burn with lust, so there is no end nor limits to their attempts to seek embellishments; and they torment themselves, only that they might attach adulterers to themselves. Such then are ye (says God;) for ye spend much care and labor in seeking for yourselves strange lovers."

He afterwards adds, *Therefore thou hast also taught lewdnesses* He alludes to the words he had before used, *Thou hast made fine* (or *fair*) *thy ways:* and now he says, *thou hast also taught wickednesses by thy ways* He declares that the Jews were worse than the Assyrians and the Egyptians, as a lascivious woman is far worse than all the adulterers whom she captivates as her paramours. For when a young man is not deceived, and the devil does not apply the fagot, he may continue chaste and pure; but when an impudent and wanton woman entices him, it is all over with him. The Prophet then says, that the Assyrians and the Egyptians were innocent when compared with his own nation. How so? "Because they have been led away," he says, "by your allurements, like young men, who are destroyed by the fallacious ornaments of strumpets; for it is the same as though they had fallen into snares: the evil then has proceeded from you, and the fault lies with you. [65]

We now understand the Prophet's meaning: for he condemns the Jews, because they afforded an occasion of evil both to the Assyrians and to the Egyptians, while they of their own accord sought their favor. It now follows —

Jeremiah 2:34

34. Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these.

34. Etiam in alis tuis repertus est sanguis animarum pauperum innocentum; non in suffossione repertae erant, sed super omnibus his (alii vertunt quia in onmibus illis; et particula est causalis, sed tamen hic adversative debet resolvi, quemadmodum multis locis.)

The Prophet repeats, as I think, what he had before said, — that the wickedness of his nation was incorrigible; for they repented not when warned, but on the contrary raged like wild beasts against the Prophets and religious teachers. Those interpreters are mistaken who think that the savage cruelty of the Jews in general is here condemned; and all are of this opinion. But

[65] The exposition of this verse is no doubt materially correct. The words have been variously rendered, On the first clause there is a general agreement, The verb "taught" in the second, is in the first person in the received text; and to this reading Blayney gives the preference, and thus renders the line, — Therefore also have I taught calamities thy ways. That is, "that God had directed calamities where to find them." But this is rather a remote idea. In favor of the second person, "thou hast taught," are several MSS., all the early versions and the Targum; and it is what has been by most adopted. "The wicked ones" of our version is a rendering not countenanced by any of the ancient versions, nor by the Targum; all render it evil or evils or wickednesses. — Ed.

the Prophet no doubt enhances this evil, by saying, that the Jews were not only obstinate in their vices, but also raged furiously against the Prophets. Hence he shews again, that God had used all remedies to heal the Jews, but without effect, for what better medicine could have been offered than for the Prophets to reprove the people and to shew to them how wickedly they had departed from God? God then wished thus to correct the vices of his own people; but so far was he from effecting anything, that at Jerusalem and through the whole of Judea, the Prophets were slaughtered, and the whole land was filled with and polluted by their blood.

Hence he says, *Even in thy wings has been found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents.* He calls the borders of garments wings. He seems to say, that these slaughters were not hid, for the Jews were besprinkled with blood to the very extremities of their garment; as though he had said, "There is no cause for me to deal sharply with you in this instance; for your filthiness is most apparent: ye have not only been rebellious against my teaching, but ye have also cruelly murdered my prophets. If ye ask, Where these slaughters are to be found? Even in your wings, on the borders of your garments; so that your crimes are fully known." We now perceive what the Prophet means.

We must also notice the import of the particle {גם}, *gam*, also, or even. Their cruelty was worse and more nefarious, because they thus rose up against their own physicians; for the prophets, as it has been said, were the ministers of their safety. As then they thus raged against God's favor so as to murder his prophets, it became still more evident, that they were utterly irreclaimable.

He afterwards adds what serves for a confirmation. *They have not been found in digging under* Some give another explanation; but their opinion is right who think, that the Prophet alludes to what is said by Moses in Exodus 22:2, — that if a thief should be found in digging under, (or undermining,) he might be killed with impunity: for he who thus breaks through into the houses of others, is equal to a robber in audacity; and he ought to be counted not only a thief, but also as one guilty of manslaughter and felony. God then says, that the Prophets, who had been slain by the Jews, had not been *found in digging up,* that is, had not been found guilty of any crime, either of robbery or of murder: for he mentions a particular act, instead of the general crime. But it has been *on account of all these things;* that is, "because they boldly dared to reprove you, because they severely condemned your vices, because they discovered your baseness, because they were enemies to your perfidy and to your sins: as then the prophets had thus by the divine Spirit carried on war with your sins, they have on this account been murdered by you. [66]

[66] Our version of this text seems on the whole the best. "Blood," {,{דם is to be taken here in a collective sense, as the verb to which it belongs is plural. Instead of ``poor innocents, ``it ought rather to be ``the innocent poor,`` as the noun in Hebrew generally precedes its adjective. ``Found'' is in the first person, and there is no different reading, and it is so in the Septuagint, and the Vulgate, though the Syriac and Arabic give the second person, and the Targum the third

We see how well the whole passage reads, provided it be applied to the prophets only. It was not indeed the object of Jeremiah to condemn murders generally among the Jews, but to shew that they were the enemies of the prophets, because they were opposed to every good and sound counsel, and were incapable of receiving instruction. The mistake of other expounders is hereby made evident: for in the last clause they touch neither heaven nor earth. It follows —

Jeremiah 2:35

35. Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned.

35. Et dixisti (hoc est, dixisti tamen; nam copula hic accipitur pro tamen,) certe (nam {כי} causalis particula hic audaciam notat, vel illam jactantiam plenam impudentiae, ut auderent asserere Iudaei se esse innoxios, certe) ego sum munda (ego sum innocens;) tantum recedat furor ejus a me: Ecce ego judico to (vel, contendam tecum in judicio,) quia dixisti, non peccavi.

The Prophet here shews that the Jews were possessed of such a brazen front, that they could not be led by any admonitions to feel any shame. Though then they were like adulterous women, and though they gave meretricious hire to such as they ran to in all parts, and though also they had murdered the prophets and the pious ministers of God, yet they boasted, as persons conscious of no evil, that they were innocent.

Thou hast yet said; that is, "How darest thou to pretend to be innocent, since thou art proved to be guilty, not by allegations, but by manifest and glaring proofs?" In short, the Prophet shews that the condition of the people was past remedy, for they would not receive any admonition; nay, they dared, as it were with the front of brass, obstinately to boast that they were innocent: Thou hast said, (he still speaks of a woman, in the feminine gender,) *Thou hast yet said, surely I am clean* Thus hypocrites not only excuse themselves, and allege vain pretences, but dare to come forth publicly, and to fly as it were above the clouds, elated by their own self — confidence. "Who will dare to allege anything against me?" Thus hypocrites willfully and impertinently challenge all the servants of God and seek by their own presumption to close the mouth of all. The Prophet now condemns this petulancy in the Jews; for though they were manifestly proved guilty, yet they boastingly asserted that they were innocent. *Only* ({אך}, *ak*, I take here to mean only) *depart,* etc. The Prophet upbraids the Jews with another crime, — that they said, that wrong was done to them by God in seeking to bring them to a right mind by punishment and by reproofs. For God, as it is well

person plural, as Calvin does. The last word is rendered ``these'' in the Vulgate and the Targum; but ``oak'' in the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Arabic, and adopted by Blayney, but disapproved by Houbigant and Horsley As to the word, rendered in our version, ``secret search,'' the early versions have pit, pits, or ditches, and so the Targum Blayney renders it ``a digged hole,`` of which Horsley approves; and he refers, as an illustration, to Leviticus 17:13, and to Ezekiel 24:7. The word means digging, and seems to be used here metaphorically for searching; there is no need of adding ``secret'' to it, --- Also in thy skirts has been found The blood of the souls of the innocent poor: Not by searching have I found it, But upon all these (i.e., skirts.) The reference is to what is said in Jeremiah 2:30, where the Jews are charged with the killing the prophets. As to ``the blood, ``we find a similar passage in Ezekiel 24:7, 8. --- Ed.

known, had inflicted many punishments on the Jews, and had also added serious reproofs. He tried by these means to find out whether they were capable of being healed. What did they say? "I am innocent; and God is angry with me without a cause. *Let him remove his anger from me;*" that is, "only let not God deal severely with us, nor use his supreme authority, and we shall be able to prove our innocency." Thus ungodly men, when urged with severe warnings, vomit forth their blasphemies against God, — "O what can I do? I know that I am not able to resist; God fights with a shadow when he afflicts me; his violence I must indeed bear though he may overwhelm me; yet he doeth me wrong: but were he to deal justly and fairly with me, I could prove that I do not deserve these evils." Such then was the language of the Jews, — *only depart let his fury from me,* we could then shew that we are just, or at least excusable.

Now also in this part we perceive the design of the Prophet: it was to shew, that the Jews not only dared dishonestly and proudly to claim innocency for themselves, but hesitated not to contend with God, and to intimate that he with too much severity oppressed them, and did not treat them justly, but announced a cruel sentence for the purpose of overwhelming them.

Behold, he *says, I will judge thee, because thou hast said, I have not sinned* Some give this version, "I judge, *or,* condemn thee." But there is here no doubt a contrast between the fury of God and his judgment. The people said, that God was too rigorous; this was his fury: God now mentions his judgment. "There is no reason," he says, "for you to allege such a pretext as this, as it will vanish into nothing; for I will in judgment contend with you;" that is, "I will really prove that I am a just judge and not a tyrant, that I execute just punishments and according to the law, and that I am not like a man in anger, who takes vengeance on his enemies and does so precipitantly and rashly: I will shew," he says, "that I am a just judge."

We may hence gather a profitable instruction. Let it in the first place be observed, that nothing is so displeasing to God as this headstrong presumption, that is, when we seek to appear innocent, while our own conscience condemns us. Then in the second place observe, that all who thus perversely rebel and strive dishonestly and shamelessly to defend their own vices, contend at the same time with God: for false excuses have ever this tendency — to charge God with unjust severity. But we see what such men gain for themselves; for God shews that he will be at length their judge, and that he will openly discover the vices of those who thought that they could excuse themselves by evasions and by false charges against himself. They then who thus obstinately resist God, must at length, according to what the Prophet declares, come to this end, — that they will be constrained to acknowledge that God has not been too violently angry with them, but has only executed a just punishment. [67]

[67] The literal rendering of this verse is as follows: — 35. And thou hast said, "Verily I have been innocent; Surely turned away has he his anger from me:" Behold I will contend in judgment with thee, On account of thy saying, "I have not sinned." The Septuagint have rendered the

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since we are loaded with so many vices, and provoke thee so often, yea, daily and in ways innumerable, — O grant, that we may not at last become hardened against thy godly admonitions, but be teachable and submissive and in time repent, lest our wantonness and hardness should constrain thee to put forth thy powerful hand against us; but as we have hitherto experienced thy patental kindness, so may we in future be made partakers of it, and thus become more and more accustomed to bear thy yoke, until having at length completed our warfare, we shall come to that blessed rest, which has been provided for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. — Amen.

Lecture Tenth

Jeremiah 2:36

36. Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria.

36. Quid discurris tantopere ad mutandum vias tuas? Etiam ab Egypto pudefies, sicuti pudefacta es ab Assur.

The Prophet goes on with the same subject. He had said before that the people were like an unfaithful wife, who having left her husband rambles here and there to gratify her lusts. For this view he now gives the reason; for he might have appeared to treat the people too severely, had not the fact been pointed out as it were by the finger; and this he does now. He says, that they ran here and there, not in a common manner, but in a way to render evident their shameful levity, such as is seen in strumpets, who without any shame seek either adulterers or fornicators.

But I have already briefly shewn what the Prophet means: When any danger was nigh, the Jews sought aid, now in Egypt, then in Assyria. Yet they knew that this was forbidden them; not that it was in itself an evil or a bad thing to seek help from neighbors; but because it was God's will that the safety and security of that people should be dependent on him only; for he had taken them under his safeguard. As then the Jews were God's dependents, they ought to have acquiesced in his protection. When they wandered here and there, it was an evidence of unbelief; and what they attributed to the Egyptians or to Assyrians, they took away from their own God, who had promised that their safety would be the object of his care. Hence he compares these movements to wanton levity; they were like those of strumpets, who ramble in all directions. Now a strumpet must be wholly shameless, when she thus seeks the gratification of her lust: for harlots often wait for the coming of lovers; but when they ramble everywhere, they are

second line, "Let his anger be turned away from me;" the Vulgate and the Arabic are the same. The Syriac is, "therefore he turns away his anger from me." "Turned away is his anger," is the Targum, Piscator, Jun. and Trem. Blayney renders it, — Surely his wrath shall turn from me. There is no reason for construing the verb in the future tense, or in the imperative mood. It is in the past tense, and there is no other reading. The claim of innocency is made on the supposition that God had turned away his displeasure. Hence the declaration that follows — that God would contest the matter — would bring it as it were into trial, as the verb here when in Niphal means. — Ed.

altogether abominable. This then is what the Prophet now means, that is, that the Jews ran here and there; and thus it was, that they *changed their ways*

There remains indeed often in harlots some natural love; but it is a proof of a brutish, shameless, and monstrous lust, when a woman seeks the company of any one she may see, or when a man lusts after any woman he may meet with. When there is such a shamelessness as this, it appears that no modesty remains, nor even what is natural; for as I have already said, it ought to be deemed monstrous, when a woman is inflamed with lust at the sight of any one. And yet this lewdness is what the Prophet reprobates in the Jews when he says, that they *ran here and there to change their ways:* so that their love never continued, but they lusted after any they met with; nay, they went here and there to allure them. This subject is spoken of oftener and more at large by Ezekiel; and we shall find this comparison used also in other parts of this book. But it is enough for me to mention briefly the design of the Prophet. [68]

He then adds, *Ashamed shalt thou also be of the Egyptians, as ashamed thou hast been of the Assyrians* Before the time of Hezekiah, the Jews had made a treaty with the Assyrians against the Syrians and the Israelites, as it is well known; and then against the Egyptians; for soon after a war arose between them and the Egyptians, who had been their confederates, and changing their policy, they went for help to Assyria. They afterwards reconciled themselves to their ancient enemies; but this second treaty also turned out unhappily. Hence the Prophet says, that the end would be the same with what they had before experienced. God had indeed chastised their ungodly defection when they went to Assyria. He now says, that no better success would attend the help of the Egyptians than what attended the help of the Assyrians. The Jews, we know, were ever subjected to plunder, and suffered more loss from their associates than from their open enemies. It was the just reward of their impiety and defection. God then declares that he would be the avenger of this second defection, as he had been of the former. It follows —

Jeremiah 2:37

37. Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head: for the LORD hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.

37. Et jam ab hoc (ab hac re, hoc est, propter hoc scelus) egredieris, et manus tuae super caput tuum, quia detestatur Jehova confidentias tuas, et

[68] The idea of gadding, or of running here and there, is not countenanced by any of the early versions. The notion of vileness or degradation is what the versions convey. The Vulgate is, — Quinn vilis factus es nimis, iterans vias tuas! How extremely worthless art thou become, iterating thy ways! The other versions are nearly of the same general import. Blayney's version is, — Why wilt thou make thyself exceedingly vile, In repeating over again thy ways? Modern critics have considered the verb to be {,אזל and not .{זול} It no doubt may be either. As shame is threatened at the end of the verse, the latter verb is the most suitable, --- Why shouldest thou become wholly degraded By repeating thy course? Even by Egypt shalt thou be put to shame, As thou hast been put to shame by Assyria. ``Course,'' or way, means here a proceeding, and to repeat it is to pursue a course similar to what had been previously adopted. --- Ed.

in illis non prospere tibi succedet.

He expresses more clearly what he had said of the shameful character of his own nation, — that the Jews, who thought that their safety would be secured by the Egyptians, were seeking their own entire ruin. This seemed to them indeed incredible; for as the Egyptians were neighbors, and as the Jews then only feared the Assyrians and Chaldeans, who were afar off, they thought that they had the best prospect: "What! our enemies are distant from us twenty or thirty days' journey; and those who are prepared to help us will be soon with us at the shortest warning." Hence the Jews thought, as we have said, that they were quite safe. But the Prophet here declares, that they were greatly mistaken; for on account of this wickedness, that is, because they trusted in their unlawful and accursed treaty, and promised themselves peace from their enemies, or thought that they could easily overcome them; *on this account,* he says, *thou shalt go forth:* but nothing could have been less credible to the Jews than what the Prophet said; for as the Egyptians opposed themselves as a wall against the Chaldeans, and were deemed unassailable, who could have otherwise thought but that the Jews would be preserved quiet in their own country? But he says, *Go forth shalt thou, and thine hands on thy head* [69]

By this gesture he means extreme despair; for women did either strike or extend their arms when any great calamity happened, as we see it done often in the present day; for when a woman, not able to keep within due bounds, either loses a husband, or expects some very great calamity, she beats her breast, or raises up her hands, according to what is said here. Jeremiah then mentions this gesture as an evidence of extreme despair; as though he had said, "The treaty which fills the Jews with so much confidence shall be so far from being advantageous to them, that it will, on the contrary, bring on them utter ruin and disgrace. [70] But the reason which follows ought especially to be observed, *because abhor does Jehovah thy confidences* The Prophet here shews why he had spoken so severely. It might have appeared that he spoke hyperbolically when he said, that the people were like an abandoned harlot, who rambled here and there in all directions: but the reason here given ought to have been sufficient to take away all evasions, and that is, that they foolishly trusted in those fallacious helps which they knew were condemned by God. Had this been permitted by God, they would not have been so severely reprimanded; but as God had forbidden them to flee to

[69] There are three other expositions of the words rendered by Calvin, "on this account." One is that of our version, "from him;" the second is, "from hence," i e , from Egypt, adopted by Piscator, Grotius, and Blayney; and the third is, "from here," i e , from this place, their own land; which, as Gataker says, is probably "the genuine sense:" it is a threatening, that they were to be led into captivity. The rendering of the Septuagint is, "{ἐντεῦθεν} --- from hence," or from this place; of the Vulgate, ``ab ista --- from that,'' meaning, evidently Egypt; of the Syriac and Targum, ``ex hoc --- from this;'' and of Arabic, ``illinc --- from thence.'' The particle {זה} is ``this,'' and not ``that.'' --- Ed

[70] "The gesture" mentioned here, a striking example of, we find in 2 Samuel 13:19. Many consider the {{ו here as having the meaning of ``with,'' and render the line as Blayney does, --- With thy hands upon thy head. But more consistent with the genius of the language is to regard the auxiliary verb to be understood, --- And thy hands shall be on thy head. There is a similar phrase in Isaiah 35:10, which ought to be rendered thus, --- And everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. --- Ed.

the Egyptians, it was in the first place a disallowed confidence; and in the second place, they thus despised the aid of God, and cast aside, as it were, all his promises: for as their hearts were fixed on the Egyptians, and as they thought that their safety would be secured by them; so their prayer to God became not only cold, but almost wholly extinguished.

We hence see that the Prophet did not exceed due limits when he spoke against the Jews with so much displeasure, and condemned them in such reproachful terms; for they had transferred the glory due to God to the Egyptians, when they considered them to be the authors of their safety; and they had thus despised the promises of God, so that there was no attention given to prayer: *Abhor, then, does Jehovah thy confidences* [71]

He then adds, *Thou shalt not prosper in them.* It ought to be carefully observed, that whatever we resolve to do that is not approved by God, cannot possibly succeed; for God will subvert all our hopes. Let us then know that here is set before us the punishment of all unbelievers, who, being not content with God's protection, wander after vain and false objects of trust, and prefer to have men propitious to them rather than God himself. Now follows —

[71] The verb for "abhor" is {,מאס which means to reject, that is, with disdain and contempt; and the same when followed by ,{ב} though often rendered ``despise'' in our version. It is rendered ``reject, ``without the ,{ב} in 1 Samuel 15:23; Jeremiah 7:29; and ``despise'' being followed by {ב} in Judges 9:38; Jeremiah 4:30. The early versions and the Targum mostly differ, and none of them give the specific meaning of the verb, except that the Septuagint give its meaning when not followed by ,{ב} ``{ἀπώσατο} --- has rejected.'' The whole verse may be thus rendered, --- 37. Also from this place shalt thou go forth, And thy hands shall be on thy head: For rejected has Jehovah those in whom thou trustest, And thou shalt not prosper by them. It is not correct to render ,{מבטחיך} ``thy confidences;'' for the word means ``thy confided ones,`` it being a Huphal participle. The Syriac renders it, ``those who afford thee confidence --- fiduciam tibi praebentibus.'' Blayney's version is, ``the objects of thy trust;'' and he translates the verb, ``reprobated.'' That this is its meaning when followed by {ב} is evident from Jeremiah 6:30. --- Ed

Chapter 3

CHAPTER 3

Jeremiah 3:1

1. They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD.

l. Dicendo, si dimiserit vir uxorem suam, et profecta ab eo, fuepit viri alterius, (id est, transierit ad alium virum) an revertetur ad eam adhuc? Annon pollutione polluta est terra in hoc? et tu scortata es cum sociis multis; revertere tamen ad me, dicit Jehova.

Many regard this verse as connected with the last, and thus read them connectedly, "God hates false confidences, because he says, "etc. But this seems not to me to be suitable; for Jeremiah brings before us here a new subject, — that God seeks to be reconciled to his people, according to what a husband does, who desires to receive into favor an unchaste wife, and is ready to grant her full pardon, and to take her again as a chaste and faithful wife. This verse, then, cannot be connected with the foregoing, in which, as we have seen, the people are condemned. The word {לסמר} *lamer,* means the same, as I think, as when we say in French, *par maniere de dire,* or as when it is commonly said, "Suppose a case." For the Prophet does not here introduce God as the speaker, but lays before us a common subject, with this preface, {לאמר}, *lamer,* that is, "Be it so, that a man divorces his wife, and she becomes allied to another husband, can she again return to her first husband? This is not usually done; but I will surpass whatever kindness there may be among men, for I am ready to receive thee, provided thou wilt in future observe conjugal fidelity, and part with thy adulteries

and adulterers." [72]

As to the main point, there is here no ambiguity: for God shews that he would be reconciled to the Jews, provided they proceeded not obstinately in their sinful courses. But in order to set forth more fully his mercy, he uses a comparison which must be a little more attentively considered. He had before said that he held the place of a husband, that the people occupied the station of a wife; and then he complained of the base perfidy of the people, who had forsaken him, and said that they had acted like a wife who, having despised her husband, prostituted herself to such adulterers as might happen to meet her: but he now adds, "Behold, if a man dismisses his wife, and she becomes the wife of another, he will never receive her again." And this was forbidden by the law. "But I am ready, "he says, "to receive thee, though I had not given thee the usual divorce at my pleasure, as husbands are wont to do who repudiate their wives, when there is anything displeasing in them." It is not a simple comparison, as many think; (I know not whether all think so, for I have not read any who seem to understand the true meaning;) for God does not simply compare himself to a husband who has repudiated his wife for adultery; but as I have already said, there are here two clauses. The Jews were then wont to divorce their wives even for slight causes, and for no cause at all.

Now, God speaks thus by Isaiah,

"Shew me the bill of your mother's divorcement,"
(Isaiah 50:1)

as though he had said, "I have not repudiated your mother." For if any one then departed from his wife, the law compelled him to take some blame on himself; for what was the bill of divorcement? It was a testimony to the wife's chastity; for if any one was found guilty of adultery, there was no need of divorcement, as it was a capital crime. (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22.) Hence adulteresses were not usually divorced; but if any woman had conducted herself faithfully towards her husband, and he wished to repudiate her, the law constrained him to give her the bill of divorcement: "I repudiate this wife, not because she hath broken or violated the bond of marriage, but because her manners are not agreeable, because her beauty does not please me." Thus the husbands were then commanded to take some of the blame on themselves. Hence the Lord says by Isaiah,

"Shew me the bill of your mother's divorcement;"

as though he had said, "She has departed from me; she has broken the

[72] The word at the beginning of this verse has puzzled most, the form being so unusual. It is left out by the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Arabic The Vulgate has "vulgo dieitur — it is commonly said." But {{ל means at times ``according to;'' and it may be so rendered here, --- According to what is said, If a man sends away his wife, And she goes from him and becomes another man's, Is he to return to her again? Polluted, shall it not be polluted, even that land? But thou hast played the harlot with many friends, Yet return to me, saith Jehovah. The particle {הן} in the first line is Chaldee for ;{אם} it is so rendered by the Targun and the early versions. The pronoun {ההיא} after ``land'' cannot be rendered as Calvin proposes; it agrees in gender with ``land.'' It is singular that the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Arabic, have ``woman'' instead of ``land;'' yet the Syriac and Targum retain ``land:`` but in them all this pronoun is construed with the noun. Gataker takes ``land'' here, and in Deuteronomy 24:4, as meaning ``the state,`` the community, and refers to Numbers 35:33; Psalm 106:38; Isaiah 24:5. --- Ed

bond of marriage by her fornications; I am not then in fault for being alienated from you."

God then does not mean in this place, that he had divorced the people; for this would have been wrong and unlawful, and could not have been consistent with the character of God. But as I have already said, there is here a twofold comparison. "Though a husband should fastidiously send away his wife, and she through his fault should be led to contract another marriage, and become the partner of another, as though in contempt of him, he could hardly ever bear that indignity, and become reconciled to her: but ye have not been repudiated by me, but are like a perfidious woman, who shamefully prostitutes herself to all whom she may meet with; and yet I am ready to receive you, and to forget all your base conduct." We now then understand the import of the words.

In the second clause there is a comparison made from the less to the greater. For the return into favor would have been easier, if the repudiated wife had afterwards become acceptable to him, though she had become the wife of another; but when an adulteress finds her husband so willing of himself, and ready to grant free pardon, it is certainly an example not found among mortals. Thus we see that God, by an argument from the less to the greater, enhances his goodness towards the people, in order to render the Jews the less excusable for rejecting so pertinaciously a favor freely offered to them.

But it may be asked, why the Prophet says, *By pollution shall not this land be polluted,* or, *through this?* I shall speak first of the words, and then refer to the subject. Almost all give this version, "Is not that land by pollution polluted." But I know not what sense we can elicit by such a rendering, except, it may be, that God compares a divorced wife to the land, or that he, by an abrupt transition, transfers to the land what he had said of a divorced wife, or rather that he explains the metaphor which had been used. If this sense be approved, then the copulative which follows must be rendered as a causative, which all have rendered adversatively, and rightly too, "But thou." I then prefer to read {ההיא}, *eeia*, by itself, "by this;" that is, when a wife returns again to her first husband, after having married another; for the law, as we have said, forbad this; and the husband must have become an adulterer, if he took again the wife whom he had repudiated. Liberty was granted to women by divorce; not that divorce was by God allowed; but as the women were innocent, they were released, for God imputed the fault to the husbands. And when the repudiated wife married another man, this second marriage was considered legitimate. If, then, the first husband sought to recover the wife whom he had divorced, he violated the bond of the second marriage. For this reason, and according to this sense, the Prophet says, that the land would by this become polluted; as though he had said, "It is not lawful for husbands to take back their wives, however ready they may be to forgive them; but I require no other thing but your return to me."

As to the words, we now see that the Prophet does not say without reason, "By this;" that is, when a woman unites herself to one man, and then to another, and afterwards returns to her first husband; for society would thus be torn asunder, and also the sacred bond of marriage, the main thing in the preservation of social order, would be broken.

It is added, *But thou hast played the harlot with many companions* [73] What we have before observed is here confirmed, — that the people had been guilty, not only of one act of adultery, but that they were become like common strumpets, who prostitute themselves to all without any difference; and this is what will be presently stated. Those whom he calls companions or friends were rivals. He says, *Yet return to me, saith Jehovah:* by which he intimated, — "Pardon is ready for thee, provided thou repentest."

An objection may, however, be here raised, — How could God do what he had forbidden in his law? The answer is obvious, — No other remedy could have been given to preserve order in society when men were allowed to repudiate their wives, except by adding this restraint, as a proof that God did not favor their levity and changeableness. It was thus necessary, for the interest of society, to punish such men as were too morose and rigid, by withholding from them the power of recovering the wives whom they had dismissed. It might otherwise have been, that one changed his love the third day, or in a month, or in a year, and demanded his wife. God then intended to put this restraint on divorce, so that no man, who had put away his wife, could take her again. But the case is very different as to God himself: it is therefore nothing strange that he claims for himself the right of being reconciled to the Jews on their repentance. It follows —

Jeremiah 3:2

2. Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms, and with thy wickedness.

2. Tolle oculos tuos ad loca excelssa (hoc est, ad colles,) et vide ubi non scortata fueris; super vias (vel, juxta vias) sedisti illis (hoc est, ad illos captandos,) quemadmodum Arabs in deserto; et polluisti terraim scortationibus tuis et malitia tua.

As the Prophet had charged the Jews with being wanton in a loose and promiscuous manner, as it is the case with abandoned women, after having cast away all shame, that they might not evade the charge and object, that they were not conscious of any crime, he makes them in a manner the judges themselves, *Raise up,* he says, *thine eyes to the high places and see;* that is, "I bring forward witnesses sufficiently known to thee; there is no hill in the land where thou hast not been connected with idols." We have already said, and we shall find the same thing often mentioned by this Prophet, — that

[73] The Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Arabic, have by a mistake rendered the word "pastors" or shepherds; but the Vulgate has "lovers," which our version and Blayney have adopted. But the word means companions, friends, intimates, neighbors. Gataker renders it "mates." — Ed.

superstitions are deemed idolatries by God. But it was a customary thing with the Jews to ascend high places, as though they were there nearer to God. This is the reason why the Prophet bids them to turn their eyes to all the hills: *See,* he says, whether is there any hill free from thy fornications. For as strumpets seek hiding — places to perpetrate their obscenities, so the Jews sought hills as their brothels. And thus their impiety was the more execrable as they went forth openly, and especially as they wished their flagitious acts to be seen at a distance, ascending, as they did, elevated places; but strumpets, having found adulterers or paramours, are wont to seek some secret retreats. The Prophet then cuts off from the Jews every occasion for evading the charge, when he bids them to raise up their eyes to the high places; for when they prostrated themselves before their idols, it was the same as when strumpets commit acts of adultery.

And he adds, that they *sat by the ways, as the Arabian in the desert* He again repeats what we have before observed, — that the Jews were not led away by the enticement of others to violate the conjugal pledge which they had given to God, but were, on the contrary, moved by their own wantonness, so that they of themselves sought base and filthy gratifications, he had before said, "Thou hast corrupted others by thy wickedness;" and now he confirms the same, "Thou hast sat, he says, "by all the ways." This also is what is done by vile strumpets, who, as it has been said, have lost all shame. But the Prophet enhances this crime by another comparison, *As an Arabian in the desert,* who lies in wait for travelers, that he may rob and kill them: thus hast thou *sat by the ways* [74]

We then see here a double comparison; one taken from strumpets, who having in time past made gain, when they find themselves neglected, besiege the ways, and offer themselves to any they may meet with. This is the first comparison; the other is, that they were like robbers, who lie in wait for travelers; as though he had said, that the Chaldeans and Egyptians were excusable when compared with the Jews, because they had been drawn by their wicked arts into illicit treaties, like a traveler who passing by is enticed by a robber, — "What art thou but a helpless man; but if thou joinest me, and engagest to be my companion, there is the best prospect of gain, and new spoils will fall into our hands daily." Such a robber is twice and three times more wicked than the other. So also, the Prophet says of the Jews, that they were like old robbers, who had become hardened in intrigues, in plunders, and in every kind of wickedness, and had enticed to themselves

[74] Gataker suggests another idea,-that the reference is made to the Arabian traders, who fix their tents in the wilderness to wait for the merchants. Blayney renders the lines differently, — Lift up thine eyes upon the open plains, and see; Where hast thou not been defiled in the highways? Thou hast sat waiting in them like an Arabian in the desert. To render {,{שפים ``open plains,'' is without authority; it means ``craggy eminences,`` or elevated places. See Numbers 23:3; Isaiah 41:18; Jeremiah 14:6. The division, too, is arbitrary. ``The ways,'' or highways, connects better with the following verb; and {להם} is not ``in them,`` but to or for them, that is, her lovers, mentioned in the preceding verse. Our version is the most suitable, with which that of Calvin corresponds. ``Arabian'' is rendered ``crow'' by the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Arabic; ``robber'' by the Vulgate, but ``Arabian'' by the Targum. It is true that the word for a crow is from the same root, but the iod attached to it shews it to be a proper name. Where the Vulgate got the word ``robber,`` it is hard to know. --- Ed.

both the Egyptians and the Assyrians. It afterwards follows —

Jeremiah 3:3

3. Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.

3. Et prohibitae sunt pluviae, et serotina non fuit; et frons mulieris meretricis fuit tibi, recusasti erubescere.

Jeremiah proceeds with his severe reproof, — that the Jews were wholly given to wickedness, for they had altogether devoted themselves to superstitions, and also to unlawful alliances, and had in both instances despised God. He now shews how great and how strong was their obstinacy. *Restrained,* he says, *have been the rains, there has not been the latter rain; yet the front of a harlot has been thine;* as though he had said, that the Jews had not in any degree been subdued by punishment. It was a most atrocious wickedness to give no ear to pious warnings, when the prophets continually cried to them, and endeavored to restore them to the right way. That they thus hardened themselves against the addresses of the prophets, was a proof of the greatest impiety. But God tried also to restore them to himself by punishments, and those very heavy. He punished them with sterility; and the drought of which the Prophet speaks was no doubt so uncommon, that the Jews might perceive, had they a particle of a sound mind, that God was at war with them. It often happens that not a drop of rain fails from heaven; for we see that many summers are hot and dry: there is no doubt but that God then reminds us of our sins and exhorts us to repent. But as familiarity makes us to overlook God's judgments, he sometimes punishes us in a new and unusual manner. I doubt not then but that the Prophet, by saying, *Restrained have been rains* from them, refers to some extraordinary instance of God's vengeance, whereby the Jews might have perceived, except they were extremely besotted, that God was opposed to and displeased with them. [75]

The import of what is said is, — that the Jews had not only run here and there through a mad impulse, according to their own wills and inclinations, but that they had also been checked by evident judgments, since God had from heaven openly shewed himself to be the vindicator of his own glory, and as there had been so great a drought, that it appeared clear that the curse of the law had been fulfilled towards them,

"I will make heaven iron to you, and the earth brass."
(Leviticus 26:19)

As to the latter rain, we have said elsewhere that by this word is meant the rain which falls just before harvest; and it is called "latter" with reference to

[75] It is usual to render the {ו before ``restrained,'' ``therefore;'' but the sentence will read better, connected as it is with the latter part of the previous verse, by giving it its most common meaning, --- And restrained have been the showers, And the latter rain has not been; Yet the front of a wanton woman hast thou had, Thou hast refused to be made ashamed. This last verb is in the Infinitive Huphal. It means in Hiphil, to make ashamed; and then in Huphal, to be made ashamed. The Targum expresses thus the general sense of the last line, ``Thou hast been unwilling to humble thyself.'' The rest of the verse is rendered almost literally. The Septuagint and the Arabic wander very far from the Hebrew. The Vulgate is a literal version, and the Syriac is nearly so, only it connects ``wickedness, ``in the last verse, with restrained, thus, --- And for thy wickedness have been restrained the dews. And it is not improbable but that this was the original reading. --- Ed.

the harvest. For, as there is great heat in those eastern parts, they want rain before the harvest commences; the extreme heat of the sun would otherwise scorch up the grain. Hence, they especially look for the latter rain, which comes shortly before harvest — time. The other rain, in September and October, is called, on account of the sowing — time, a seasonable rain; for it soaks and moistens the seed, that it may strike roots and gather rigor and strength. The object is to shew, that God had from heaven given to the Jews manifest tokens of his displeasure, and yet without any benefit; for they had the front of a harlot, and felt no shame; that is, they were moved by no judgments of God, and could not bear to be corrected.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast been once pleased not only to adopt us as thy children, but also to unite us to thyself by the bond of marriage, and to give us a pledge of this sacred union in thine only — begotten Son, — O grant, that we may continue in the faith of thy Gospel, and so honestly keep the pledge given to thee, that thou mayest also shew thyself to us as a Husband and as a Father, and that we may to the end find in thee that merciful kindness which is needful to retain us in the holy fear of thy name, until we shall at length enjoy fellowship with thee in thy celestial kingdom, through Christ our Lord. — Amen.

Lecture Eleventh

Jeremiah 3:4

4. Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth?

4. An non posthac clamabis ad me, Pater mi, dux adolescentiae meae tu es?

God, after having set forth the wickedness of his people, and severely reproved them as they deserved, now kindly invites them to repentance, *Wilt thou not say to me hereafter,* he says, *My Father!* Some incorrectly render the words, "Wilt thou say to me, My Father," as though God would reject what they said: and they give the meaning, — that the Jews would act dishonestly in thus glorying in God's name, from whom they were so alienated. But very different is the meaning of the Prophet: for God mitigates the severity of the reproof which we have observed, and shews that he would be ready to be reconciled to them, if they repented: nay, he waits not for their repentance, but of his own accord meets and allures these perfidious apostates: "What!" says God, "shall there be no more any union between us?" For God expresses here the feeling of one grieving and lamenting, when he saw the people perishing; and he seems anxious, if possible, to restore them.

It is with this design that he asks, "Will they not again call on me as their Father and the guide of their youth?" And by this periphrastic way of speaking, he intimates that he was the husband of that people; for most tender is that love which a youth has for a young virgin in the flower of her age. God, then, makes use now of this comparison, and says, that he still

remembered the love which he had manifested towards his people. In short, he shews here that pardon was ready, if the people sought reconciliation; and he confirms the same thing when he adds —

Jeremiah 3:5

5. Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest.

5. An observabit in seculum? an custodiet in perpetuum? Ecce, loquuta es, et perpetrasti malitias (vel, scelera) et potuisti.

God shews that it was the fault of the Jews, that he did not receive them into favor. And here he takes the argument from his own nature, and speaks of himself in the third person; and it is the same as though the Prophet had interposed this reasoning, "God is not inexorable, for he is as ready to forgive as he is long — suffering: now, then, what prevents you from living happily again under his government? for he will spare you, provided he finds in you genuine repentance." We now then see, what the Prophet means here: for as God had kindly exhorted the people to repent, the Prophet speaks now generally of God's own nature, — that *he keeps not for ever, nor reserves perpetually*

These words, when put alone, mean that he does not cherish vengeance, and in our language we imitate the Hebrews, *Il lui garde.* This *garde,* when put without anything added to it, means, as I have said, that vengeance is cherished within. But nothing is more contrary than this to the nature of God. It hence follows, that the Jews had no obstacle in their way, except that they shunned God, and that being addicted to their own vices, they were unwilling to receive the pardon that was freely offered to them.

As to the second clause, it admits of being explained in two ways. We may regard an adversative particle to be understood, "though thou hast spoken and hast done, "etc.; as if God had said, that he would be propitious to the Jews, however atrociously they might have sinned. But another view is more simple, — that God here complains that there was no hope of amendment, as they had become hardened in their vices, "Thou hast spoken," he says, "thou hast done, and thou hast been able." And interpreters further vary in their views: for the copulative is explained by some as a particle of comparison, in the sense of {כאשר}, *keasher,* "according to what thou wert able, thou hast done wickedness." But others take the words more simply and more correctly, as I think, "Thou hast been very strong;" that is, thou hast exerted all thy power, so that thou hast put forth all thy strength in doing evil, as we say in Latin, *pro virili*, with all thy might; that is, as far as thy capacity extended, thou hast devoted thyself to wickedness. [76]

[76] This and the preceding verse have been variously explained. The view given by Calvin has been most commonly adopted; but it is hardly consistent with a literal rendering of the original, which I consider to be as follows, — 4. Hast thou not from this time called to me, "My Father, the guide of my youth art thou: 5. Will he reserve wrath for ever, Or keep it to the end?" Behold, thou hast so spoken, And hast done evils and persevered. "From this time," that is, the time spoken of before, when the people followed idolatry. During this time, they called God their Father, and promised themselves the remittance of his displeasure. They said

I therefore give this explanation: God had before put on, as it were, the character of one in grief and sorrow, and kindly exhorted the people to repent, and testified that he would be ready to pardon them, and at the same time shewed in general that he would be propitious, as he is by nature inclined to mercy. After having set forth these things, he now adds, that he despaired of that people, because they gloried in their own wickedness: for to speak and to do means the same as if he had said, that the people were so impudent, that they boasted of their rebellion against God, and dared to call darkness light; for the superstitious, we know, glory against God without any shame. Now, such was the state of the people; for God, by his prophets, condemned this especially in them — that they had corrupted the pure worship of the law; but they with a meretricious front dared to set up against him their own devotions and good intentions, as they are commonly called. As then, they thus presumptuously defended their wicked deeds, God here complains that they were in no way healable, and so he leaves them as past remedy. This I regard as the real meaning of the Prophet: and of similar import is the verb {תוכל}, *tucal;* "thou hast put forth all thy might," he says, that is, thou hast observed no limits in sinning, but, on the contrary, hast given thyself up to unbridled licentiousness. It now follows —

Jeremiah 3:6-8

6. The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot.

6. Et dixit Jehova ad me in diebus Josiae regis, An vidisti quid fecerit aversatrix (alii vertunt, rebellis) Israel? Profecta est ipsa super omnem montem excelsum, et subtus omnem arborem frondosam, et scortata est illic:

7. And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it

7. Et dixi, Post facere ipsam (hoc est, postquam fecit omnia haec,) Ad me revertere (alii in tertia persona reddunt, Revertatur;) et non reversa est: et vidit perfida ejus soror Jehudah.

8. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.

8. Et vidi, quod super his omnibus (hoc est, quod propter haec, nempe {אדות} significat occasiones vel causas,) quia scortata erat rebellis Israel, dimiserim ipsam (repudiaverim,) et dederim librum repudiorum ejus (repudii ejus) illi, et non timuit perfida Jehudah soror ejus, et scortata est etiam ipsa.

this, and yet followed their superstitions. This is the view which Gataker seemed most disposed to take. Horsley thus paraphrases the last line, — "Thou hast persisted incorrigibly in doing evil." The Septuagint give "called," in the past tense; the Vulgate, in the imperative, "voca — call;" the Syriac, the Arabic, and the Targum, in the future tense, "Wilt thou not call," etc. The received text has {,{קראתי which is no doubt wrong; the iod is not found in very many MSS., and all the early versions agree in giving the verb in the second person. The same is to be said of ,{דברתי} it ought to be ,{דברת} though Horsley prefers the former; but neither the early versions nor the context favor it. The phrase {מעתה} is rendered by the Septuagint, ``{ὡσ} {οἰκόν} --- as a house,'' and by the Arabic, ``ut filia --- as a daughter.'' How such mistakes could have been made, it is difficult to say. The Syriac has ``hereafter;'' and the Targum, ``from this time.'' --- Ed

Here the Prophet enters on a new discourse: he relates what God had committed to him, and mentions the time, even in the reign of Josiah. It is indeed well known, that the land was then cleansed from superstitions; for that pious king labored to restore the true worship of God, and to remove all the filth and defilements, by which the temple and the whole of religion had been corrupted. He strenuously exerted himself, and no doubt there was an improved appearance of religion throughout the land; but we shall see that a great portion of the people were under the influence of hypocrisy and deceit., as it is usually the case when rulers seek to support the pure worship of God, and to free it from all corruptions; for there are many hypocrites, who for a time dissemble, while the same antipathy to God still remains. Such was then the condition of the people.

And this ought to be carefully observed; for Jeremiah might have appeared to have dealt somewhat too sharply and rigorously with his own nation, as reform was in the mouth of all, according to what we find to be the case with many now, who having left the superstitions of the Papacy, seemed at first to embrace the doctrines of the Gospel, but all now wish to be satisfied with any kind of reformation; at the same time, they shake off the yoke of Christ and can bear submission to no discipline: in short, their object, is to subvert all order; and yet they boldly claim to be the advocates of reformation, whenever their impiety is reproved. This was no doubt the contest which Jeremiah had to carry on, the same with that by which the Lord tries his servants at this day. He therefore says, that he received this commission *in the days of Josiah,* that is, when that king was laboring to establish the pure worship of God, and no one dared to oppose; for we find that God was then worshipped by the whole people without any external corruptions.

But what is contained in this commission? *Hast thou seen,* he says, *what apostate Israel hath done?* God here compares the ten tribes with the tribe of Judah, with whom was united, as it is well known, the half tribe of Benjamin: he then compares Israel with the tribe of Judah, "Do you not see what rebellious Israel hath done?" But he introduces the kingdom of Israel, as well as the kingdom of Judah, under the character of women; for God, as it has already appeared, represents himself as the husband of his people. He then says that he had two wives, even Israel and Judah. God had indeed espoused to himself the whole seed of Abraham by one contract; but Jeremiah speaks here in a popular manner. Though the Israelites had departed from God, yet he had not wholly rejected them. The kingdom of Israel had then become adulterous; but God for a time bore with that sin, so that the covenant, in part, remained. For this reason he acknowledges as his wives both Israel and Judah. Hence he says, "Hast thou not seen what estranged Israel hath done?" The word {משבה}, *meshibe,* is derived from {שוב}, *shub,* which signifies, both to return and to depart; and *Jerome* everywhere renders it *aversatrix,* one who turns aside, or is estranged. [77]

[77] It is correctly rendered as a noun, for had it been an adjective or a participle, it would have

But some render it "rebellious;" we might say more correctly in French, *debauchee She went,* he says, on *every high hill, and under every shady tree, and there played the harlot* In short, God complains that the ten tribes had violated the sacred bond of marriage, when they prostituted themselves to idols, even on all high hills and under all shady trees: for as I have already said, they chose those places as though there was some holiness both on mountains and under shades of trees.

He afterwards adds, *Yet I said;* God here states, that he had long suspended his judgment before he punished the people of Israel. He then extols here his patience, that he had not immediately visited the Israelites as they deserved, but bore with them and for a long time waited to see whether they could be reclaimed: *I said,* then, *after she had done all these things, Return to me* If we read in the third person, the sense will be the same, "I hoped indeed that they would return to the right way, though they had thus fallen away, yea though they had denied me by an impious defection, and had become alienated from the faith and from piety." But I am more inclined to another view, — that God here records the fact, that he had recalled to himself the ten tribes by his servants the Prophets, though they had by their many crimes provoked his wrath. Here then God shews how perverse the Israelites had been; for he had tried to restore them, if possible, to himself, but had spent all his labor in vain. I thus explain, *I said,* of the prophetic instruction: "Though then the Israelites had plunged themselves into impieties, I yet ceased not to try whether they could be restored to me." He intimates, in short, that he had been unlike those husbands, who will not be reconciled to their wives, burning with jealousy, because they see that they had been exposed to so much disgrace. God then shews that though the Israelites had departed from him, he yet sent his prophets, and of his own free will sought reconciliation with them, but that they had refused to return. [78]

He then adds, *See did she,* that is, the whole kingdom of Judah, that, for al1 this, because the *rebellious Israel had played the harlot, etc.* We shall hereafter find the design of this comparison; for he amplifies the sin of the kingdom of Judah, inasmuch she had time enough to observe what he now relates, and was able to see it at a distance as it were from a watchtower;

followed the word Israel. Literally it is, "the apostates," — Hast thou seen what she did, the apostates Israel? Or, it may be rendered, "the backslider Israel," though the word is deficient, having no feminine termination. — Ed.

[78] The difficulty at the beginning of the eighth verse may be removed either by adopting {,ואראה as in two MSS., and taking the verb to be in Hiphil, or ,{ותרא} as in one MS., as a repetition of the former verb, according to the Syriac It is left out in the Vulgate But it is most suitable to the context to take the verb to be in Hiphil. Then the passage would read thus, --- 6. Hast thou not seen what she did, the apostate Israel? Go did she on every high hill and under every green tree, And play there the harlot: 7. And I said, after she had done all these things, ``To me return;'' but she returned not: And see this did the hypocrite, her sister Judah: 8. And I caused her to see, that on all these accounts, As adultery the apostate Israel would commit, I dismissed her, and gave to her The bill of her divorcement; Yet fear not, did the hypocrite Judah, her sister, But went and played the harlot, even herself. ``On all these accounts,'' or, for all these reasons, refers to several things-the first apostasy --- God's invitation --- and Israel's refusal. God caused Judah to see these things by his prophets, but Judah feared not. The word ,{בגדה} hypocrite, or the perfidious one, is a feminine participle, used as a noun. It is explained in the tenth verse by ``feignedly'' or falsely. Hypocrites would be the correct rendering. It is rendered by the Septuagint, ``faithless --- {ασύνθετος},'' --- by the Vulgate, ``prevaricatress --- praevaricatrix, ``and by the Targum, ``falsifier'' or cheat. --- Ed

yet she saw it without any advantage. God then intended to shew how great was the hardness of the Jews, who had seen the defection of the ten tribes, and had seen how severely they had been reproved by the prophets.

He then says, *And I saw* As he had said that the kingdom of Judah had seen what happened to Israel, so he now says, that he had seen both, *See* then *did I* Now, what does he declare that he had seen? Even that Judah had played the harlot; for he now speaks of Judah as of a woman. Then God says, that it was not a thing hid from him that Judah had surpassed the crimes of her sister, not through ignorance or deception, but through deliberate wickedness: See, he says, *did I,* that notwithstanding *all these things,* she *played the harlot* He thus explains more fully what he had briefly touched upon before. He had said, that Judah had seen, but this on account of its brevity might have appeared ambiguous: he therefore explains it more at large; "*See did* Judah that I gave a bill of divorcement to her sister, because she had played the harlot; and yet she feared not;" that. is, she thought not of repenting, when she had such a striking example of vengeance set before her eyes.

But it may be here asked, how could it be said that a bill of divorce had been given to the Israelites, when he denies by the Prophet Isaiah that he had given it? (Isaiah 50:1.) But the Prophet here takes another view of the subject; for he does not speak here of the bills of divorce, such as were usually given, when a husband repudiated a wife who had been chaste and faithful; but he speaks of that lawful divorce, when a woman, convicted of adultery, is liable to a capital punishment. God then by his prophet Isaiah denies that he had given a bill of divorcement; but he says here that he had given it, because he had repudiated an adulterous woman. It was not indeed at that time customary among the Jews to divorce an adulteress, for she was led to execution. But we have seen at the beginning of the chapter that there is a difference between God and husbands. As then God did not deal, as he might have justly done, with the Israelites, and did not execute a capital punishment, as he might rightly have done, and what was usually done, he says that he had *given a bill of divorce,* that is, that he had repudiated that people. But by the bill of divorce he means exile; for when the ten tribes were banished, it was the same as though God openly shewed that he had no connection with that people: as long as they continued in the holy land and in the promised inheritance, some kind of union remained; but when they were dispersed here and there, and every sort of worship had ceased among them, and also when the very kingdom of Israel had no longer an existence, God had then divorced them.

See then *did her sister Judah,* and she *feared not* It was indeed an instance of great insensibility, not to learn wisdom at the expense of others; and it is a complaint found everywhere in the prophets, — that the Jews were not stimulated to repentance, while God spared them, and at the same time set before them examples which ought in all reason to have terrified them. For

what ought they to have considered, but that God would punish those many transgressions by which they provoked his wrath, since he had not spared their brethren? They saw that the kingdom of Israel had been abolished, and yet all of them derived their origin from the same father, even Abraham: how was it then that they so heedlessly despised God's judgment, which had been for a long time before their eyes? Hence he complains that they *feared not* It now follows —

Jeremiah 3:9

9. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.

9. Et factum est a velocitate (vertunt tam Hieronymus quam alii interpretes, facilitatem; nomen deductum est a {קלל}, quod significat interdum esse velocem; hic levitas notatur, vel petulantia, factum est, igitur, a levitate, aut petulantia) scortationum ejus, ut pollueret terram (vel, contaminaret; alii vertunt, peccare faceret; sed Hieronymus ubique fere reddit hoc verbum per contaminare, neque male quadrat,) et scortata est cum lapide et cum ligno.

Here the Prophet completes his charge, — that so far was it that the punishment which God had inflicted on the Israelites, had any effect on the tribe of Judah, that she surpassed by her levity and lustfulness the whoredomes of her sister. *She has polluted,* he says, *the land,* or made the land to sin, that is, rendered the land guilty. It is indeed what greatly exaggerates the crime, when it is said that the land became guilty or contaminated. The land, we know, was in itself pure, and could contract no pollution from the vices of men; but that the impiety of men might be exhibited the more detestable, the land is said to have been contaminated by them:

Or, it may be said that the land was made guilty. How so? The reason why they are said to have contaminated the land or to have made it guilty or to have implicated it in their own vices, he gives in these words, she has *played the harlot with stone and with wood* [79] Of this metaphor of playing the harlot it is not necessary now to speak; for we have said already, that this similitude is often repeated, because God had united that people to himself and bound them to him, as it were, by the sacred bond of marriage. Hence whenever the people departed from the pure worship of God, they were justly said to have played the harlot, for they violated their pledged faith: as simplicity of faith is spiritual chastity, so apostasy is that shamelessness and perfidy, when a wife becomes unfaithful to her husband by following adulterers. It afterwards follows —

Jeremiah 3:10

10. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto

[79] This verse may be thus rendered, — And it was, that through the report of her fornication, She polluted the land; And she committed adultery with stone and wood. There is no instance of {,{קל in the sense of swiftness, etc., being used as a noun. It is the Chaldee for ,{קול} voice, fame, report. Gataker paraphrases the words thus, ``by her notorious fornication.'' The early versions and the Targum all differ. Excessive addiction to idolatry is evidently what is spoken of. --- Ed

me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD.

10. Atque etiam in tote hoc (vel, in his onmibus) non reversa est ad me perfida (vel, fraudulenta: {{דגב est fraudare) sorer ejus Jehudah in toto corde suo, sed in mendacio, inquit Jehova.

He goes on with the same subject, --- that the Jews were not moved by any fear when they saw the dreadful vengeance executed on their brethren on account of their sins. Her perfidious sister, he says, returned not to me, that is, after so many warnings by the prophets and such an example of punishment. He however adds an explanation, --- she turned not with her whole heart, but feignedly and falsely. [80]

The Prophet anticipates here such objections as the Jews might have alleged, ``What! thou deniest that we have returned! Is not the whole land cleansed from idolatries? Is not God worshipped according to the requirements of the law? Is there any more an altar seen under the shades of trees or on hills?'' As then they might have thus evaded the charge as they usually did, the Prophet obviates such an evasion and says, ``Though they have ill appearance given some tokens of repentance, yet they have only put on a disguise and have acted falsely towards God; for there is no integrity in them.'' We now more clearly see why he had before specifically mentioned the time of Josiah; for the Jews then returned feignedly to God: there was in the king and in a few a right feeling, but in the rest dissimulation only. God then in a few words shews, that he cares not for that reformation which is false and feigned, but that he requires a genuine feeling within: hence he thus concludes ---

Jeremiah 3:11

11. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.

11. Et dixit Jehova ad me, justificavit animam suam aversatrix Israel prae fraudulenta Jehuda (vel, perfida, semper est {בגדה}.)

We now see more clearly for what purpose Jeremiah compared the ten tribes with the kingdom of Judah; it was done in order to shew that the Jews, who wished to be deemed far more holy than others, were yet more perfidious and deserved a heavier punishment, because they acted so deceitfully with God.

It may be here asked, why he pronounces the Jews worse than the Israelites, while they still continued in a sort of middle state of things. We indeed know that the kingdom of Judah was become so corrupt, that hardly any religion remained there; yet the temple was still standing and the priesthood still existed at Jerusalem. But the Prophet condemns the Jews more than the Israelites for other reasons, even because they ought to have become wise through the calamities of others, and they ought to have been confirmed in true religion when they saw their brethren falling away from the pure worship of God: these things they ought to have maturely considered. It was this supine sottishness that rendered them worse than all their brethren, and also their pride, the chief cause of their condemnation, for they boasted that they remained perfect, while the ten tribes had become degenerated. These were the

[80] This verse stands connected, not with the preceding, but with the eighth, — Yea, even for all this, Return to me did not the hypocrite, Her sister Judah, with all her heart, But in falsehood, saith Jehovah. "In falsehood," or, by dealing falsely, as it may be taken by a participle preceded by a preposition. — Ed.

reasons why he says that Israel, though a perfidious woman, was yet more righteous than her sister Judah.

The language indeed is not to be strictly taken when it is said, that she justified her soul; for God does not here excuse the Israelites, nor does he free or absolve them from guilt, (for he had severely punished them;) but this way of speaking is commonly used by the prophets; --- Sodom was righteous in comparison with Jerusalem; and Tyre and Sidon were just when compared with the Jews. (Ezekiel 16:47, 48.) Justified then has she her soul, [81] even the treacherous or the apostate Israel, in comparison with the perfidious Judah; that is, for the reasons which I have stated. The obstinacy of the Jews was greater and less excusable: the external worship of God, which they had retained, ought to have been a bridle to check them; and they had also seen how severe a judge God had been towards the ten tribes; but the judgments of God they despised, and derived no benefit from them.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast deigned to adopt us as thy people, and to unite us to thyself in thine only --- begotten Son, --- O grant, that we may continue pure and chaste in our obedience to thy Gospel, and never turn aside to those corruptions which disunite that sacred bond of union, which has been confirmed between us by the blood of thy Son, but that we may so persevere in serving thee, that our whole life and all our actions may be evidences of that holy calling, by which is laid up for us the hope of eternal salvation, until we shall at length come into the possession of that kingdom which has been obtained for us by so great a price, and there enjoy the fruit of our faith, sincerity, and perseverance, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Twelfth

Jeremiah 3:12

12. Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever.

12. Vade et clama (hoc est, cum clamore intona) sermones hos versus Aquilonem, et dic, Revertere rebellis Israel, dicit Jehova: non, non faciam incumbere (cadere, ad verbum) iram meam (alii vertunt, faciem meam; sed metaphorice slgnificat iram) in vos, quia clemens ego, dicit Jehova, non servabo in seculum.

The Prophet, after having shewn that the tribe of Judah deserved a heavier punishment than the ten tribes, and having mentioned the cause, that they had seen their brethren severely chastised and were not moved, now turns his discourse to the Israelites themselves, or the ten tribes, and promises that God would be propitious to them. The kingdom of Israel had now been overthrown, and the people had been banished into Assyria, Persia, and Media. They had been scattered, and the name of the kingdom had been obliterated. The land had been often laid waste and the kingdom partly existed, as four tribes only were first driven to exile; but at, length

[81] This is the literal expression, but the word {{נפש is often taken for oneself, and ought often to be so rendered. See Numbers 30:5; Job 18:4; Psalm 7:2; God is said to swear by his soul, that is, by himself, Amos 6:8 --- Then said Jehovah to me, --- Justified herself hath apostate Israel, More than the hypocrite Judah. Manifest and open apostasy is more honest than the double dealing of hypocrites, who combine God's worship with idolatry; nor is it so hateful to God. --- Ed.

the very name of a kingdom ceased to exist, and they were all, as I have said, led away into captivity. Hence the Prophet is bidden to address his words towards the north; for though the greater part of the people dwelt then in the east, yet as they had been banished by the Assyrians, God had a regard to the capital of the monarchy in bidding the Prophet to address those whom the enemies had led away to the north.

Cry, then, not so much on account of the distance of the place, but that the Jews, who were deaf, might hear him crying; for the Prophet was bidden to speak not only for the sake of the Israelites, but that through them he might set before the Jews the mercy of God, if only they returned to a sound mind. Now the import of the whole is, --- that though the Israelites had been rebellious and had turned away from God, yet pardon was ready for them, if they returned. What the Prophet means by the word return, we have already in part explained, and we shall have to speak on the subject more fully elsewhere. He then requires repentance, and promises that God would be propitious to them in case they returned to him.

He afterwards adds, I will not make my face, or rather, my wrath, to fall upon you; for this latter meaning is the most appropriate. God had already severely punished their sins; for what can happen to a people more grievous than to be banished from their own country, and then to be oppressed by cruel tyranny? They yet suffered a heavier punishment; for the worship according to the Law had been taken away from them, they had been repudiated by God, they had lost that glory by which they thought that they excelled all other nations in having been chosen as God's peculiar people. All these things had been entirely lost. In what sense then does God declare that he would not be angry with them? By this way of speaking the Prophet simply means, that God would not be irreconcilable, as though he had said, ``My wrath shall not dwell, or shall not he upon you; but I will mitigate the punishment which I have inflicted.'' Hence I do not disapprove of Jerome's rendering, ``I will not make steady,'' (firmabo;) though when he adds ``face, ``he does not sufficiently set forth the meaning of the Prophet. But this may be admitted, ``I will not make steady my wrath upon you;'' that is, ``My wrath shall not lie or dwell on your heads, so as wholly to overwhelm you.'' God's wrath had already fallen upon them, but in such a way that there was still some hope of deliverance. God then denies, that the calamities, by which he had chastised their sins, would be fatal, for he would withdraw his hand and not pursue them to the last extremity.

The meaning then is, --- that if the people returned to God they would obtain pardon, because God of his own free will invited them and promised that the punishment which he had inflicted on account of their sins, would be only for a time. [82]

[82] 12. Go and proclaim these words towards the north, and say, — Return, apostate Israel, saith Jehovah; I will not cause my wrath to fall on you, For merciful am I, saith Jehovah; I will not reserve it for ever. That {,{פנ commonly rendered ``face,'' means sometimes wrath or anger, is evident, see Psalm 21:9; Lamentations 4:16. God is said to have his face against the wicked, Psalm 34:16, and to make his face to shine on his people, Psalm 80:3. This accounts for the word being taken sometimes, as it were, in a bad sense: He has an angry as well as a smiling face. The rendering of the Septuagint is, ``I will not set firm ({στηριῶ}) my face upon you,'' of the Vulgate, ``I will not turn away my face from you,'' of the Syriac and Arabic, ``I will not harden my face against you,'' and of the Targum, ``I will not send my wrath upon you.'' The last comes nearest to the Hebrew. Blayney's version is a paraphrase, --- I will not look down upon you with a lowering brow; and so is his version of the last line, --- I will not keep displeasure in view for ever. Our version in both instances is much to be preferred. --- Ed.

God further confirms this truth by mentioning what his nature is, for merciful am I, and I will not retain wrath for ever The promise was special in case the people returned; God now adds a general truth by way of confirmation, --- that he was disposed to shew mercy, and that he would readily forgive for his mercy's sake. Since God then is such, and cannot deny himself, there is no reason why a sinner should despair and thus close up the way, that he should not in his penitence implore God's mercy.

We may hence gather a profitable doctrine, --- that whenever unbelief lays hold on our minds, so that we cannot apply to our benefit the promises of God, this should ever be remembered by us --- that God is merciful. As God then is so gracious, that he reserves not wrath for ever, but that it is only for a time, we ought to entertain hope; and corresponding with this is what is said in the Psalms,

``A moment is he in his wrath;
and life is in his goodness and mercy,'' (Psalm 30:5;)

as though he had said, that God's wrath soon passes away, provided we repent, but that he shews his mercy through all ages; for this is what is meant by the word ``life.'' He then goes on ---

Jeremiah 3:13

13. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD.

13. Tantnm modo (vel, atqui) cognosce iniquitatem tuam, quia adversus Jehovam Deum tuum scelerate egisti, et dispersisti (vel, dissipasti, aut, prostituisti) vias tuas alienis, sub omni arbore frondosa, et vocem meam non audivisti, inquit Jehova.

God lays down here a condition, lest hypocrites, relying on his goodness, should become more and more hardened, and yet think that he is bound as it were to them; for they usually reason thus, --- ``God is so kind that he recalls us to himself, and of his own free will invites even sinners; we may therefore easily settle matters with him.'' Thus hypocrites by false thoughts' delude themselves, thinking that they can elude God, since he seeks nothing else but to restore sinners to himself. Hence with the promise of favor there ought ever to be connected an exhortation to repentance. God then reminds here the Israelites, that they were greatly deceived, if they thought they could without any difficulty obtain pardon.

Hence he says, know thine iniquity The particle {אך}, ak, may be rendered only, or but, or yet. I prefer the second meaning, but; for an exception, as I have said, is here added, lest the Israelites slumbered in their vices, if they persuaded themselves that God was, as it, were, in their power and subject to their will. We hence see that the Prophet, modifying what he had said, introduces this sentence, ``But in the meantime know thine iniquity, otherwise thou canst expect no peace with God.'' Then these words follow, because thou hast acted wickedly against Jehovah thy God By these words the Prophet proves that the Israelites were guilty, lest they supposed that they could by evasions escape the wrath of God; for we know that often, even those who are conscious of their guilt, are not willing to confess their sins; and it is strange that men are so besotted as ever to contend with God. On this account

the Prophets, when they exhorted the people to repent, at the same time brought to light their sins. Were there in men frankness and honesty, there would be no need thus to charge them; but as they either boldly deny their sins, or are so callous as to be moved by no fear, it is necessary to prick them sharply and even deeply to wound them. This is what the Prophet now does; Thou, he says, hast done wickedly against thy God; as though he had said, ``I do not now in vain remind thee to own thy sins, for God himself condemns thee: think not thou that thou canst gain anything by thy subterfuges.''

He mentions also particulars, that he might come into closer quarters with them, Thou hast dispersed, he says, or scattered, thy ways to strangers, under every shady tree He again compares the Israelites to strumpets, who commonly so prostitute themselves, that they ramble from one place to another, invite and allure all they meet with. The Prophet then says, that the Israelites had thus dispersed themselves. He speaks delicately on an indelicate subject. But what he means is, that the Israelites were not content with one kind of superstition or with one idol, but blended together as many superstitions as they could, and borrowed false notions from all quarters: they were like a rambling strumpet, who prostitutes herself to all men indifferently. And strangers he calls all their fictitious gods; for as I have often said, they ought to have regarded him as their husband. When therefore the Israelites turned away to other gods, they became like a woman, who leaves her husband and prostitutes herself to any she can find. It is indeed a most common thing for those who forsake the true worship of God to seek for themselves various errors from all quarters, and to abandon themselves unreservedly to all kinds of superstitions.

He at length adds, And thou hast not hearkened to my voice By this fact the Prophet enhances their sin; for they had been instructed in the doctrine of the law, and understood the right way of salvation: how then was it that they thus polluted themselves with so many superstitions? It could not have been attributed to ignorance. It was then their manifest rebellion against God. The Prophet then shews that they had been disobedient and intractable, and that they had relapsed into idolatry and pernicious errors, because they had shaken off the yoke of God, and suffered not themselves to be ruled and guided by his word. [83]

We now then perceive the meaning of this verse: God first requires a confession of sins from the Israelites; and thus he sets forth how available that return would be which he had previously mentioned; for until a sinner knows his sinfulness, he will never really and from the heart return to God, as the beginning of repentance is the confession of guilt. He then proves them to have been guilty, that he might cut off from them every pretense for evasion. He mentions in the third place specific sins, that he might hold them as it were fast bound, even that they had polluted themselves with superstitions, and that they had become, not only like an adulterous woman who follows another man, but also like filthy strumpets, who run here and

[83] But yet know thine iniquity, That against Jehovah thy God hast thou rebelled; For thou hast diversified thy ways for strangers, Under every green tree; And to my voice ye hearkened not, saith Jehovah. The word {{אך is rendered by the early versions and the Targum, But, or But yet, or Nevertheless, ``Verum,'' ``Verumtamen.'' The third line is thus explained by Parkhurst, ``Thou hast run after various heathen nations in their several idolatries.'' And this they did, while they refused to attend to the voice of God. To attend to, rather than to obey, is what is meant. So the Vulgate and the Syriac, ``My voice ye heard not,'' or, as the former, ``thou didst not hear.'' --- Ed

there and make no difference between men known or unknown. He shews in the last place, that all this happened through mere obstinacy; for they had cast aside every regard for God, though he had given them his law, and sent the prophets as its faithful interpreters, so that they understood what God approved and what was just and right. The reason then why they went astray was, that they closed their ears to God's word, and suffered not themselves to be ruled by it, but became wholly unteachable. Let us go on ---

Jeremiah 3:14

14. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

14. Revertimini filii rebelles, dieit Jehova, quoniam ego maritus vester (vel, dominatus sum in vobis, ut alii vertunt; alii, taedio affectus sum in vobis; dicemus postea de hoc verbo,) et assumam vos, unum e civitate, et duos e familia (vel, cognatione, vel, tribu,) et addueam vos in Sion.

Jeremiah repeats the same thing in other words; but God by so many words shews clearer how ready he would be to grant pardon, provided the Israelites really repented. It would have been enough for God to testify once, that he would be reconcilable, but seeing that they were slow and hard to believe, he proceeds in the same strain. It is a wonderful forbearance and kindness that God, finding his favor neglected, and as it were rejected through the sloth of men, should yet persevere, and invite them again and again. What man would thus patiently bear the loathing of his favor and kindness? But we see that God does not immediately reject the tardy and the slothful, but adds new stimulants that he might at length move them, though this may seem more than necessary. How great is our torpidity? Were not God daily to urge us, how little attention would any of us give to his admonitions? It is, therefore, no wonder that he, pardoning our tardiness, should again and again invite us to repentance; which we find is done continually in the Church.

This, then, is the reason why the Prophet now repeats the same thing, Return, now, ye rebellious children; for he had said before, ``Return, thou rebellious Israel.'' He then adds, For I am a husband to you Some regard {בעל} bol, in the sense of being wearied, when found as here, {בכם} {בעלתי} bolti beke*m, ``I have been wearied by you:'' but this meaning does not comport with this passage. [84] More correctly, then, have others rendered the words, ``I am lord to you: ``but this lord is not to be taken indefinitely as in Latin, for it properly means a husband, who is a lord to his wife. God, then, no doubt, continues the same comparison, that of a marriage, which has already been often mentioned; for he charges the Israelites with adultery, because they had departed from him. Hence it is that he says, I am your husband* He had previously said, ``Though a person, when he repudiates his wife, and she be married to another, will never again be reconciled to her; yet I am ready to forgive your perfidy and wantonness: only observe chastity hereafter, and I will deal kindly with you.'' Similar is this passage, ``I am your husband,'' though I have repudiated

[84] Nor is there an instance of such a meaning. Literally it is, "For I have been married with (or to) thee." When this verb is followed by {כ,} as in Jeremiah 31:32, this is its meaning; but when followed by {ל,} as in 1 Chronicles 4:22, it means to rule, to exercise dominion. The Vulgate is, ``For I am thy husband.'' The Targum gives the meaning, ``For I have chosen you.'' The Septuagint went astray, ``For I will rule over you.'' --- Ed

you. He had, indeed, said, that he had given them a bill of divorce, and thus testified, as by a public document, that there was no longer any connection between him and that people, for exile was a kind of divorce; but he says now, ``I am your husband; for though I have been grievously offended with you, because you have broken your pledged faith, I yet remain in the same mind, so as to be ready to be your husband.''

We now, then, perceive the real meaning of the Prophet: despair might have laid hold on the Israelites so as to dread that access to which the Prophet had invited them; but that no terror might hinder them to repent, God here declares that he would become their husband, and that he had not forgotten that relationship with which he had once favored them. The sum of what he says is, ``I have once embraced you with the love of a husband; ye have, indeed, become alienated from me, but return, and I am ready to forgive and to receive you, as though ye had always been faithful to me.''

Again will I take you, he says; and then he adds, one from a city, two from a family Deserving of especial notice is this passage; for God shews that they were not to wait for one another, and also, that though the whole body of the people rotted in their sins, yet a few would return to him, and that he would be reconciled to them. This was a point most necessary to be taught; for God's covenant was in common with the whole seed of Abraham; they might then have concluded that the covenant was extinct, except he gathered together the whole people; for he had not chosen one or two or a hundred or a thousand, but all the seed of Abraham. Since then the promise, without exception, was common, to all, any one might thus reason, ``What connection have I with God, except as one born of the race of Abraham? but I am not alone, for we are all the children of Abraham: yet I see that none turn to God, so I must perish with the rest of the people.'' Now, that this thought should not hinder the godly, he says, ``I will take one from a city, two from a family;'' [85] that is, ``If one only come to me from a city he shall find an open door; if two only from a tribe come to me, I shall receive them.'' We now apprehend the design of the Prophet.

Interpreters, indeed, explain one from a city as meaning, that though the multitude should perish, yet God would not deny forgiveness to three or four; but they teach not what is especially worthy of notice, that two or three are mentioned, because this thought, as it has been said, might have perplexed them, that is, that they had been all in common chosen as a holy people.

What is here taught may be useful to us in the present day. For we see many foolishly excluding themselves from the hope of salvation, and seeking no access to God, because they have a regard to one another, and the great mass hold them entangled. How is it under the Papacy, that so many pertinaciously resist God? even because they think themselves safely hid in the multitude. We also find among us that some are an hindrance to others. Let this truth be ever remembered, that when God stretches forth his arms, he is ready to receive, not only all, were they with one

[85] The word is taken sometimes in a limited sense, and means what we understand by family: but it has here evidently a more extended meaning, and signifies a tribe, a community; for it includes more than a city. Such is its meaning in Jeremiah 8:3; and in Amos 3:1, it comprehends the whole community of Israel. It is rendered "{ἐκ} {πατριᾶς}, --- from a tribe,'' by the Septuagint, but improperly; ``kindred,`` by the Vulgate and the Targum It no doubt means sometimes kindred, but not evidently in this place. --- Ed

consent to come to him, but also two or three, even from one city, or from a whole people.

He adds, I will cause you to come to Zion. This had been once said before: God intimates that their exile would be temporary, that the Israelites would again be made partakers of his inheritance, if they returned to God in sincerity and truth. It follows ---

Jeremiah 3:15

15. And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

15. Et dabo vobis pastores secundum cor meurn, et pascent vos scientia et intelligentia (hoc est, scienter et prudenter).

Here God promises that he would so provide for the salvation of his people after their return from exile, that they should not again perish. But the cause of God's vengeance ought to be observed, which is expressed in the fifth chapter of Isaiah, ``My people,'' he says, ``have been led captive, because they had no knowledge; therefore the grave has widened its soul or its throat. [86] He then says, that the cause of the people's ruin was, because instruction had ceased among them, and pastors had become mute dogs or robbers. Here, on the other hand, God declares that he would give them faithful pastors, who would discharge in a befitting manner their office. I, indeed, allow, that under this term are included faithful and wise magistrates; but he especially refers to prophets and priests, whose office it is in particular to reform idolatry. [87]

We hence learn that the Church cannot continue without having faithful pastors to shew the way of salvation. The wellbeing of the Church then is secured, when God raises up true and faithful teachers to proclaim his truth: but when the Church is deprived of sound teachers, all things soon fall into ruin. For God, no doubt, intimates by this promise that he would not only be the deliverer of his people, so as to restore them from exile, but that he would be also their perpetual guardian after the people had returned to their own country. It hence follows, that the Church of God is not only begotten by means of holy and godly pastors, but that its life is also cherished, nourished, and confirmed by them to the end. As it is not enough for civil order to be once set up, except the magistrates continue in their office, so nothing is more ruinous to the Church than for God to take away faithful pastors. It cannot indeed be, that people will return to God, unless prophets be first sent: but God speaks here of a continued course of instruction, and of a well regulated government in the Church, as though he had said, ``I will not only give you prophets to lead you

[86] Rather, "itself;" for the word often rendered soul, has sometimes this meaning. See note on Jeremiah 3:11. — Ed.

[87] Blayney, following the Targum, renders pastors "rulers," and feed, "rule:" but this is to interpret and not to translate, as the words have never strictly these meanings, though what are sometimes to be understood by pastors are rulers, and by feeding, ruling or governing. But the interpretation in this instance seems not to be correct, and for the reason here assigned by Calvin It is indeed the opinion of Henry, Scott, Adam Clarke, and others, that both civil and ecclesiastical pastors are intended; and if so, "knowledge" may be applied to the latter, and "wisdom" to the former. The Septuagint have omitted "wisdom," and retain only "knowledge." The Targum has "knowledge and wisdom;" the Vulgate, "knowledge and doctrine;" the Syriac, "knowledge and prudence;" and Blayney, "knowledge and discretion." The verb {רעה means ``to feed on,`` as in Isaiah 44:20, or, as here, to ``feed with.'' It means also to ``feed itself'' as a beast does, Isaiah 11:7

from your wanderings to me, and to restore you to the way of salvation, but I will also continually set over you sound and faithful teachers.'' But we must notice, that those who preside cannot rightly discharge their office unless they are endued with wisdom. God also intimates his paternal love, when he says, that good pastors would be dear to him. It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 3:16

16. And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it, neither shall that be done any more.

16. Et erit, cum multiplicati fueritis et fructificaveritis (vel, creveritis) in terra diebus illis, dicit Jehova, non dicent amplius, Arca foederis Jehovae, et non ascendet in cor, et non recordabuntur ejus, et non visitabunt, et non fiet amplius.

Interpreters have perverted this verse, for none of them have understood the design of the Prophet. The Jews, for the most part, have adduced frigid and far --- fetched glosses, --- that they would no more bring out to battles the Ark of the Covenant, as no enemy would invade their land. They think then that a peaceable state is promised to the people, as they would be constrained by no hostile force to carry the Ark of the Covenant here and there. But we clearly see that the words mean no such thing: it is then a comment wholly foreign to the subject. Others say, that what is said must be applied to the time of the Messiah, and none even of the Jews deny this; for it afterwards follows, that the Israelites would return with the tribe of Judah. This had not yet been fulfilled; it hence follows, that the Prophet here predicts of the kingdom of Christ. But the Jews, while allowing this, do not understand that anything is said of the abrogation of legal ceremonies; it has yet been thought by almost all Christians, that the Prophet here teaches us, that when Christ should come, an end would be put to all the shadows of the law, so that there would be no more any Ark of the Covenant, as the fullness of the Godhead would dwell in Christ.

This indeed is a view which seems plausible, but the meaning of the Prophet, as I think, is wholly different: for he refers here to that divorce or division which had for a long time existed between the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel. Though the kingdom of Israel, as to the number of its men, largeness of territory and wealth, was more flourishing and prosperous than the kingdom of Judah; yet there remained these advantages to the Jews, --- that they had a Temple built according to God's command, --- that its place had been chosen by God, --- that they had the Ark of the Covenant as a symbol of God's presence. Hence there was contention between the kingdom of Judah and the ten tribes: the Israelites were elated on account of their number and their riches, and other temporal advantages; and the Jews gloried in their Temple and the Ark of the Covenant. And what now does the Prophet say? He declares that such would be the concord between the Israelites and the Jews, that the Jews would no more say, ``The Ark of the Covenant,'' ``The Temple of God;'' for God would be present with them all. And the Prophet proceeds to confirm more fully what I have just said: it is therefore necessary to add the two following verses. He

then says ---

Jeremiah 3:17-18

17. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

17. Tempore illo vocabunt Jerusalem solium Jehovae, et congregabuntur ad eam omnes gentes ad nomen Jehovae, Jerusalem dico; et non ambulabunt posthac (vel, amplius) post duriciem (alii vertunt, obstinationem; est etiam interdum cogitatio, {שררות}, post duriciem) cordis sui malam.

18. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.

18. In diebus illis venient domus Jehudah cum domo Israel, venient simul e terra aquilonis ad terram, quam dedi in haereditatem patribus vestris (vel, quam dedi possidendam jure haereditario patribus vestris.)

We now understand more clearly what I have already said, --- that the Prophet promises here that there would be concord between the ten tribes and the kingdom of Judah, when both returned from exile; as though he had said, that their condition would be better than it ever had been; for the seed of Abraham had been torn as it were asunder; and the people whom God intended that they should continue in a holy union had become divided in the most shameful manner. We indeed know that there had been inveterate hatred between the Jews and the Israelites. As then there had been such disgraceful division for a long time between the children of Abraham, the Prophet now shews what would be the fruit of exile; for after having been for a time chastised by the Lord, they would return to their own country, not to entertain the same emulation as had existed, but to unite together in calling on God, in order that the Jews might be as brethren to the Israelites, and the Israelites might cultivate mutual concord with the tribe of Judah.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou at this day mercifully sparest us, when yet in various ways we provoke thy displeasure, --- O grant, that we may not harden ourselves against thy chastisements, but that thy forbearance may lead us to repentance, and that also thy scourges may do us good, and that we may so truly turn to thee, that our whole life may testify that we are in our hearts changed; and may we also stimulate one another, that we may unite together in rendering obedience to thy word, and each of us strive to glorify thy name, through Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirteenth

WE began yesterday to explain what the Prophet means, when he says, that there would be no more a remembrance of the Ark of the Covenant after the return of the Israelites into their country and their increase in it, even because there would be no discord among them as there had been before they were led into exile. For the ten tribes, we know, worshipped God after their own manner, as they had departed from the pure and simple teaching of the law. The Prophet then means, that they

would all be the worshippers of the only true God, and that there would be among them such an unity of faith, that the Jew would not call God his God only, and that an Israelite would not desire for himself another God. Hence he adds, It shall not ascend on the heart; that is, such a thought shall no more come into their minds; and they shall not remember it; that is, no monuments of their ancient disunion shall exist any more among them; and they shall not visit it, which means, they shall no more come stealthily into Jerusalem who may wish to offer sacrifices to God; and in short, he says, No such thing shall be done [88]

Then he says, At that time called shall be Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah The Prophet may appear inconsistent with himself by saying that Jerusalem would be the throne of God, and yet that the Jews would make no mention of the Ark of the Covenant: but the two clauses wholly agree, for he means that Jerusalem would be the seat and habitation of the eternal God, without any dispute being raised among them. The Israelites before their exile boasted that they retained the worship of the true God, and so magnificent was the display, and so great the pomp, that Jerusalem was quite obscure as to any external splendor. But the Prophet says that this distinction would no longer exist, and that the Israelites would no more contend with the Jews, for all would allow Jerusalem to be the sanctuary of God; as though he had said, ``Pure religion shall flourish among them all without exception, such as had not done before.'' And this passage he more clearly confirms by the words which follow: ---

Assemble into it shall all nations to the name of Jehovah; or, on account of the name of Jehovah ({ל}, lamed, is here instead of a causal particle) shall all nations assemble at Jerusalem. [89] We see that there is nothing doubtful in these words, for the Prophet distinctly declares, that the worship of God, such as the Law required, would attain such esteem, that all nations would be ready to embrace whatever would be taught by the Jews. But by all nations we are to understand strictly the ten tribes, as they are called many nations in several places. If any one prefers to extend the meaning, let him enjoy his own opinion.

As I have said yesterday, the Jews think that the time of the Messiah is described here, because what Jeremiah promises has never been fulfilled; for there was no assembling of nations when the Jews returned from exile to their own country, as the Jews alone returned at that time. Hence they conclude that this passage can

[88] The literal rendering of this verse I conceive to be the following, — 16. And it shall be, that ye shall multiply And be fruitful in the land. In those days, saith Jehovah, they shall no more say, — "The Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah;" And it shall not come to their mind, Nor shall they mention it, nor visit it; And not made shall it be any more. The two first lines seem connected with the former verse. There is a gradation in the three last lines, — It shall not be thought of, much less mentioned or named, as given by the Septuagint, — still less be visited, — and much less still, be made. This gradation is destroyed by Blayney by rendering the first line, Nor shall it be the delight of their heart; literally it is, "And it shall not ascend on the heart." The "heart" means often in Hebrew the mind; and "to come to mind" is the idea; it would not be thought of. The phrase occurs in this book in two other places, Jeremiah 7:31; Jeremiah 44:21; and, not to think, or, not to come to mind, is the most suitable meaning, as it is given in our version. The purpose of this kind of gradation is to render the thing more certain and indisputable, so that there might be no room for doubt. — Ed.

[89] This seems to be the best rendering. Blayney leaves out the word "Jerusalem;" but for no sufficient reason. The whole verse is as follows: — In that day call shall they Jerusalem, "The throne of Jehovah;" And gathered into it shall be all the nations, For the name of Jehovah, even to Jerusalem; And they shall no more walk after the resolutions of their wicked heart. — Ed.

be explained in no other way than by referring it to the kingdom of Messiah; which, indeed, I confess to be true. But as that return and restoration of the people was a prelude of Christ's kingdom, the prophets ever begin at that time whenever they prophesy of the Church being renewed. It is indeed true, that the restoration of the whole world was to be looked for through the coming of Christ; yet God began to restore his Church, when he stretched forth his hand to the Jews, and when they built the city and the temple; which was necessary to be done before Christ came forth. But as to this passage, whether by nations we understand the ten tribes, or both kingdoms, or all nations indiscriminately, the meaning of the Prophet is equally clear, which is this, --- that the Church would become larger than before, when God restored the people, and that God would then cause true religion to flourish, unaccompanied with envy and strife.

What follows confirms the opinion, that the passage is to be explained of the two kingdoms, Walk, he says, shall they no more after the evil hardness of their own heart [90] It was not usual to speak thus of heathen nations, who had ever been strangers to the teaching of the Law. As this, then, can only be specifically applied to the Jews and Israelites, that explanation is the most to be approved, which makes all nations to mean the ten tribes, or the whole people.

Then is added, what is of the same meaning, In those days shall come the house of Judah with the house of Israel It hence appears, that the Prophet speaks of the posterity of Abraham and not of other nations; for he adds this verse as explanatory. It might, indeed, have been asked, ``What does this mean, All nations shall come?'' To this he answers, ``The house of Israel shall unite with the house of Judah;'' that is, there shall be no more hatred between these two nations, for they shall acknowledge one another as brethren, and know that they have arisen from the same source, and that they ought to be one people. In short, the Prophet explains in this verse what he had said before. And we ought especially to notice what he adds, Come shall they together from the land of the north into the land which I have given to be possessed by their fathers The Jews had not yet gone into exile; the Prophet said this to them while they were quiet, as it were, in their own nest at Jerusalem, and in the country around; nor could he convince them of what they afterwards found to be true to their great loss, --- that an exile was nigh them, like that which they then saw had

[90] "Evil" is connected with "hardness;" but it belongs properly to "their heart." The word rendered "hardness" is {{שרירות a plural noun, found eight times in Jeremiah; here, and in Jeremiah 7:24; Jeremiah 9:14; Jeremiah 11:8; Jeremiah 13:10; Jeremiah 16:12; Jeremiah 18:12; Jeremiah 23:17; and twice elsewhere, Deuteronomy 29:19; Psalm 81:12. It is so variously rendered by the Septuagint, that they evidently did not understand its specific meaning; {ἐνθυμήματα}, thoughts, devices; {τὰ} {ἄρεστα}, things pleasing or agreeable; {πλάνη}, wandering. These words are used for it in Jeremiah. The Vulgate ever renders it ``pravitas --- pravity --- wickedness.'' The Targum uniformly renders it ``cogitatio --- thought or imagination.'' The latter word is used in our version, (except in Psalm 81:12, ``lust,'') with a marginal reading ``stubbornness.'' The Syriac and Arabic vary as much as the Septuagint, ``appetites, lusts, will,'' etc. To ``walk after'' precedes it in most instances except in Jeremiah 18:12, where it is preceded by ``doing.'' Now to ``do the hardness of the heart,'' is no suitable expression; nor is ``imagination'' or ``stubbornness'' anything better. It can be derived from no verb which means to think or to imagine, or which has any connection with depravity or wickedness, or with appetites or lusts. Nor can we derive it from ,{שרה} which those do who render it ``stubbornness;'' for that will suit the passage referred to in Jeremiah 18:12. It must then come from ,{שר} to direct, to regulate, to rule, to exercise authority. It occurs three times in a reduplicate form; as a participial noun in Esther 1:22, and as a verb and a participle in Hithpael in Numbers 16:13, where it is applied in the sense of making oneself a prince or a tyrant. The literal meaning of the noun then is, in the plural number, predominances, domineerings, arbitraments; and it may be rendered determinations, resolutions, predominant influences or inclinations. ``Walk shall they no more after the resolutions of their wicked heart.'' It is used in Jeremiah 7:24, in apposition with ``counsels,'' being evidently a stronger word: it seems to mean resoluteness or resolvedness, a full determination, a willful decision. Parkhurst renders it, ``the ruling principles.'' --- Ed

happened to their brethren, the Israelites. But yet the Prophet spoke of them, as though they had been exiled and dwelt like the Israelites in the north country; Come together , he says, shall they from the land of the north [91]

They might have objected and said, ``We are as yet enjoying our own inheritance, and no one can drive us hence, for it cannot be that God shall be deprived of his own temple, as he has chosen for himself a perpetual habitation among us.'' Such words were no doubt clamorously spoken by them. But the Prophet here repels their vain confidence, and says, that their only hope of deliverance was in looking forward to the restoration which the Lord would grant them after they had been for a time banished from their country. Now the Prophet here sets forth to them the benefit which would arise from exile, in order that they might bear with more submission the punishment they were to endure: for they might have a hundred times despaired, had they no hope that this exile would be only for a time, and that they would again be gathered together with their brethren the Israelites. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 3:19

19. But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.

19. Et ego dixi, Quomodo ponam to in filios, et dabo tibi terram desiderii (hoc est, desiderabilem,) haereditatem cupiditatis [92] (hoc est, quae concupiscitur,) exercitus gentium? Et dixi, Pater mi, clamabis ad me, et a me non recedes (de post me, ad verbtum, {מאחרי}.)

It is not my purpose to mention all the expositions of this verse; but it is enough to shew what seems to be the meaning of the Prophet. Whenever I touch on opinions which I disapprove, this I feel constrained to do, because when they present the appearance of truth, readers may be deceived by them: but when the truth itself is sufficiently conspicuous, I am not disposed to spend labor in refuting the opinions of others.

What, then, the words of the Prophet mean is this, --- God here asks, How was it possible that the race of Abraham could again be propagated since it was nearly dead? The answer is, It shall be, when thou wilt call me Father, and turn not away from me The question was asked, that the Jews might feel as though their condition was past remedy. And doubtless, since they had so greatly and so obstinately provoked God by their wickedness, they might have seemed to have become wholly lost. God then assumes here the character of one filled with astonishment, as though he had said, ``Ye are, indeed, in a state of despair, there is no hope of your salvation; but yet, as it is my purpose again to restore you, I wish now to find out a way, by

[91] Calvin uses the verb “venient, “shall come, twice: but the first verb is to walk, and expresses the associating of Judah with Israel, or their union. The words are, — In those days walk will the house of Judah with the house of Israel, And come shall they together from the land of the north, To the land which I made their fathers to inherit. They would be first united, and then advance together to their own land. — Ed.

[92] Calvin takes the word in its Chaldee meaning; {{צבי means in Hebrew, elation, splendor, glory; but in Chaldee, desire, what is desired; and this suits the passage best, ``The inheritance of desire to hosts of nations;'' that is, ``The inheritance desired by hosts of nations;'' This is the meaning preferred by Gataker I would render the whole verse thus, --- 19. But I, said have I, ``How shall I put thee among the children, And give thee the land of delight, The inheritance desired by hosts of nations?'' Said have I also, ``My Father shalt thou call me, And from me thou wilt not turn away.'' When the pronouns are given before verbs in Hebrew, as {אנכי} I, here, they are ever emphatical. ``But I,'' or, ``as for me,'' or, ``even I have said.'' --- Ed

which your race may again be propagated.'' How, then, is this to be done? He shews that the only thing required was, to call him Father, not with the mouth, but really with the heart.

We now, then, perceive the meaning of the Prophet: for he humbles the Israelites by thus ascribing astonishment to God, as though it was a thing very difficult to be done; but at the same time he gives them hope, because salvation was prepared for them, provided they called on God with a sincere heart, and acknowledged him as their Father, and that perseveringly, without ever turning aside from him. In short, God intimates that the Israelites were like dead men, and that their salvation was hopeless, without a resurrection, he yet promises them salvation on this condition, --- that they called on him and did this, not with a double heart, nor by a sudden impulse, such as soon vanishes away; for he says, Thou shalt not turn aside from me; that is, ``Be always obedient to me, and I will prove that I shall not be called in vain a Father by you.'' It follows ---

Jeremiah 3:20

20. Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD.

20. Certe (subaudienda est particula sicut) perfideagit mulier a socio suo [93] (hoc est, perfide agit cum marito, ubi ab ipso discedit, vel, se alienat,) sic perfide egistis in me, domus Israel, inquit Jehovah.

He confirms the first clause of the preceding verse: for he had said that it could hardly be that the Jews would recover what they had lost, and be formed again a new people; and he shews the reason, --- because they were like an adulteress, as he had before stated. But he did not yet wish to take away every hope; only he insists on this, that they were seriously to consider their sins, in order that they might become displeased with themsalves, and flee to God's mercy for refuge. Nor did he do this so much for their sake, as for the sake of the people among whom he dwelt. For he had respect, as it has been often stated, especially to the Jews, who had become so hardened in their vices as not to think that this example, by which God intended to terrify them, so as to bend their hard hearts to repentance, belonged to them. Hence it was for this reason that God so severely reproved Israel; for he had said before, that the Jews were still worse. He afterwards subjoins ---

Jeremiah 3:21

21. A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God.

21. Vox super excelsa audita est, fletus precationum filiorum Israel; quia perverterunt viam suam, obliti sunt Jehovae Dei sui.

What I have stated becomes now more evident, --- that the case of the Israelites is here set before the Jews, that the perverse, whom God had spared, might know

[93] Blayney, contrary to all the early versions, construes the word {{מרעה with woman, ``a wicked woman.'' ``Friend,'' or associate, or partner, is here evidently put for husband; a thing commonly done in other languages. Our common version of this verse is by no means correct: the preposition {מ} is not always ``from,'' but sometimes ``with.'' So here, --- Surely, as a woman deals perfidiously with her partner, So perfidiously against me have ye dealt, O house of Israel, saith Jehovah. --- Ed.

that the same punishment impended over them, except they returned in due time to him: for the Prophet declares, that the Israelites were weeping and in tears, because they had departed from their God, and violated their faith pledged to him. For what purpose did he do this? That the Jews, who indulged themselves in their own pleasures, might be awakened, and be convinced, that except they anticipated God's judgments, the same tears and the same weeping were prepared for them. The Israelites, indeed, did not as yet thus weep and shew signs of true repentance; for the Prophet does not here commend their feeling or their piety, but intimates, that they were thus severely afflicted, because they had forsaken their God.

A voice, he says, was heard on high places, 'that is, It was everywhere sufficiently known how cruelly the Israelites were oppressed by their enemies. Now they cried, then they called themselves the most wretched of men: why was this lamentation? Because they had perverted their ways It is, then, the same as though he had said, --- that it was a monstrous perverseness in the Jews, that being warned by the punishment of their brethren, they did not repent: for the calamity which happened to the Israelites filled all men with terror. That kingdom had, indeed, flourished for a long time; but the land had been emptied of its inhabitants, and was occupied by wild beasts, until some were sent from Persia and other parts in the East to cultivate it. How could a land so pleasant and so fruitful have become like a desert? Even because God had so predicted:

``Ye have neglected,'' he says, ``my Sabbaths, and your land shall rest, and it shall no more be wearied by you.''
(Leviticus 26:34, 35.)

It was an awful sight; and nations, far and wide, were able to see how great must have been the impiety of that people, on whom God had taken such dreadful vengeance. Were not the Jews, who had this solitude before their eyes, and this devastation of the land, extremely stupid in overlooking all this?

We now see the design of the Prophet, when he says, A voice on high places was heard, as though the Israelites cried on the tops of mountains. And he adds, the weeping of the supplications, etc.: but he does not mean, that they were prayers which arose from faith; but simply that they were such lamentations as betokened misery and wretchedness. In giving a reason, the Prophet mentions not what the Israelites confessed, but only shews the cause why they so deeply deplored their calamities; it was, because they had perverted their ways, and forgotten Jehovah their God [94] He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 3:22-23

22. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God.

22. Revertimini, filii rebelles; sanabo transgressiones vestras. Ecce, nos venimus ad to, quia Jehova Deus noster.

[94] The verse may be thus rendered, — 21. A voice on the high places! Heard is the weeping, the supplications Of the people of Israel; Because they had perverted their way, Had forgotten Jehovah their God. Instead of “high places,” Blayney has “plains;” but there is no satisfactory reason for the change. As the verb in Hebrew commonly precedes its nominative, the construction adopted above is the most suitable to the character of the language. — Ed.

23. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel.

23. Certe fallacia a collibus, multitudo montium; certe in Jehova Deo nostro sans Israel.

God here exhorts the Israelites to repent, that by their example he might move the Jews. The benefit of what is here taught might indeed have reached to the miserable captives and exiles; but as Jeremiah was especially the teacher of his own nation, he labored chiefly no doubt for their advantage, as we have before stated. God then here declares, that he would be reconcilable to the Israelites, how grievously soever they had sinned, he afterwards introduces them as answering, Behold, we return, or we shall come to thee: for the Prophet speaks here of the future conversion of the ten tribes.

It is then a dialogue between God and the Israelites. God himself freely invites them to repent: Return, he says, ye rebellious children; and then he promises to be a physician to heal their diseases: I will heal thy transgressions; that is, I will blot out thy sins, and absolve thee from guilt. God then undertakes to do these things; first, to stimulate the Israelites to repentance, and then to give them the hope of pardon: and he says that a remedy was provided for them, except they hardened themselves. Now, the Israelites, on the other hand, make this answer, Behold, we shall come to thee Here Jeremiah condemns the obstinacy of his own nation, by saying, that the Israelites, when thus kindly invited by God, would not be perverse, but would, on the contrary, be tractable and obedient. This indeed was not fulfilled, when a liberty to return was given to the people, except in the case of a few, who had a right feeling, and preferred the glory of God to their temporal advantages. But the number was small; nor was it a matter of surprise; for God had not previously said, without reason, that if one came from a city, and two from a tribe, he would be received, though others continued fixed in their perverseness. However this may have been, God here intimates that the Israelites would not be so refractory as not to obey his admonition when the hope of pardon and salvation would be presented to them: and this is mentioned, that the perverseness of the Jews might appear more detestable.

But some think that the Israelites are here upbraided, because they hypocritically pretended that they always sought God. Hence they elicit this meaning, ``Ye indeed say, Behold, we return to thee, thou art our God;'' as though he condemned their hypocrisy, because they falsely alleged that they always sought him. But this view seems to me foreign to the intention of the Prophet. Hence I doubt not but that Jeremiah sets before the Jews, as in a picture, what ought to have constrained them not to persist so obstinately in their sinful courses: ``Behold,'' he says, ``God is prepared to receive into favor your brethren, who are undone and past all hope; and when they shall hear God's voice kindly and graciously inviting them to himself, they will doubtless return: why then do not ye obey?''

And in the same sense is to be taken what follows, Surely, deceit is from the hills, and the multitude of mountains, or, from the multitude of mountains, as the letter {מ} is to be repeated. Here the Prophet more fully expresses the evidence of their

repentance, as though he had said, ``We have been deceived by the hills and the multitude of mountains; we thought that there would be more defense from a large number of gods than if we worshipped one God: this deception has led to ruin. Let then all these deceits be now discarded; for we shall be content with the only true God.'' In short, the Israelites confess, in these words, that they had been drawn into ruin by the worst of errors, while they sought many gods, and did not acquiesce in the one true God.

Then they add, for surely in Jehovah our God is salvation They set here the one true God in opposition to all their idols, as though they had said, that the cause of all their evils was, that they did not continue in the service of the one true God, but wandered after a multitude of Gods. We hence see that these two things cannot possibly be connected, --- to worship the true God, --- and to seek for ourselves various other gods, and to form vain hopes, as they do, who are not satisfied with the only true God. [95] It follows ---

Jeremiah 3:24

24. For shame hath devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth; their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters.

24. Et pudor (vel, probrum) voravit laborem patrum nostrorum a pueritia nostra, oves eorum et pecora eorum, filios eorum et filias eorum.

They confirm more fully the same complaint, --- That God had by manifest proofs shewed the sins of the nation; for he had consumed their labor, that is, whatever they had acquired by labor. He also adds sheep and cattle, and then sons and daughters He does not indeed ascribe this consumption to God; but the mode of speaking is more emphatic, when he says, Shame has consumed the labor of our fathers from our childhood: for by shame he understands wickedness, of which they ought to have been ashamed. The meaning then is, that all the evils they had endured could in no other way be accounted for, inasmuch as the whole was to be ascribed to their wickedness. Our shame, then, [96] that is, our wickedness, has consumed the labor of our fathers It follows ---

Jeremiah 3:25

25. We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.

25. Jacuimus in pudore nostro, et operuit nos ignomina nostra; quoniam cum Jehova Deo nostro scelerate egimus, nos et patres nostri, a pueritia nostra, et ad hunc diem usque; et non audivimus vocem Jehovae Dei nostri.

As the Israelites say here nothing new, but continue the same subject, I propose

[95] The literal rendering of these two verses is the following:- 22. Return, ye apostate children, I will heal your apostasies. — Behold us! We come to thee; For thou art Jehovah our God: 23. Surely, in vain are the hills, The multitude of mountains; Surely, in (or through) Jehovah our God Is the salvation of Israel. The word rendered “apostate,” does not mean “rebellious,” but such as turn away, i.e., from God; and the word for “apostasies” means the same, being from the same root. The {{ before the word for ``hills,'' is not a preposition, as it is commonly taken, but a formative: so it appears from all the versions. Blayney conjectures that it belongs to the former word, and makes it ;{לשקרים} but then he does not account for the {ל} prefixed to it. There is no different reading. The Septuagint is, {εἰς} {ψεῦδος} {ἦσαν} {οἱ} {ζουνοὶ} --- for a lie were the hills. The Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic, are materially the same. --- Ed

[96] Rather, “And the shame,” i e , the idol-worship, referred to in the preceding verse; the article {{ is prefixed to the noun. This is the view taken by Gataker and Blayney See Jeremiah 11:13; Hosea 9:10. --- Ed

only to touch briefly on the words, lest I should be too tedious. They say then that they were lying in their miseries; and why? because they had dealt wickedly with God We see that they are explaining what they had confessed, --- even that the labor of their fathers had been consumed by their shame, that is, by their wickedness; and they ascribe to themselves what might have been put to the account of their fathers, because they knew that they were heirs to their iniquity. We have lain, they say, in our shame [97] They here shortly confess that they were deservedly miserable, that they could not accuse God of cruelty, as that he afflicted them too severely. How so? because they were lying in their own shame, and their own disgrace covered them; as though they said, that the cause of all their evils was to be found in their sins, and that it was not to be sought anywhere else.

Because we and our fathers, they say, have done wickedly By these words they intimate that they had acted thus, not for a day only, but had been so perverse, that from early life they had imbibed the iniquity of their fathers, and thus added evils to evils. They had said before, that the labor of their fathers had been consumed from their childhood, thereby signifying the continuance of their punishment; for God had not for a day chastised them, but had often repeated his scourges, and yet without any benefit. Now they add, ``As we have from our childhood dealt wickedly towards our God, so also he has warned us from our childhood to return to him; and it has been our fault that we have not returned, for he called us; but as we were obstinate, so also God has justly executed on us his vengeance.''

They afterwards say, even to this day; by which they confirm what I have already stated, --- that they had been so perverse as not to cease from their vices. At the same time he points out the source of all their wickedness: they hearkened not to the voice of Jehovah Had they gone astray, and had God been silent, their fault might have been extenuated; but as God had daily sent prophets to them, who never ceased to cry in their hearing, and yet they continued deaf, their perverseness in their sinful courses was inexcusable. We then see that their sin was increased by the circumstance, that they refused to hear the voice of God; as though he had said, that God had done his part in calling them back from the way of ruin, but that they had been so obstinate as to disregard his favor, and that they thus justly suffered, not only for their impiety, but also for their ingratitude and perverse wickedness.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cease not, though favored with many blessings, to provoke thee by our misdeeds, as though we avowedly carried on war against thee, --- O grant, that we being at length warned by those examples, by which thou invitest us to repentance, may restrain our depraved nature, and in due time repent,

[97] Calvin seems to have followed the Septuagint in rendering the verb in the past tense. The Vulgate and Syriac retain the future of the original; but the Targum gives the present, and rightly so, as the future in Hebrew is often to be so taken. It is the same in Welsh, the future conveys the meaning of the present. This distich might in that language be rendered exactly according to the Hebrew, and the future would be understood as expressing what the present state of things is, — Gorweddwn yn ein cywilydd, A gorchuddia ni ein gwarth. But in English the present must be used, as it is the confession of the penitent when returning to God, — We lie in our shame, And cover us does our disgrace, Because against Jehovah our God Have we sinned, we and our fathers, From our childhood even to this day; And we have not hearkened To the voice of Jehovah our God. — Ed.

and so devote ourselves to thy service, that thy name through us may be glorified, and that we may strive to bring into the way of salvation those who seem to be now lost, so that thy mercy may extend far and wide, and that thus thy salvation, obtained through Christ thine only --- begotten Son, may be known and embraced by all nations. --- Amen.

Chapter 4

CHAPTER 4

Lecture Fourteenth

Jeremiah 4:1

1. If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.

1. Si reverteris Israel, dicit Jehova, ad me revertere (vel, apud me quiesce;) et si abstuleris abominationes tuas a facie mea, et non fueris vagus (alii, et non migrabis.)

The Prophet no doubt requires here from the people a sincere return to God, inasmuch as they had often pretended to confess their sins, and had given many signs of repentance, while they were acting deceitfully with him. As then they had often dealt falsely with God and with his prophets, Jeremiah bids them to return to God without any disguise and in good faith. With regard to what is here substantially taught, this is the Prophet's meaning; but there is some ambiguity in the words.

Some read thus, ``If thou returnest, Israel, to me, saith Jehovah, ``connecting ``to me, {אלי}, ``with the first clause, then they read separately ``{תשוב}, teshub, thou shalt rest;'' and so they think that what follows is the repetition of the same thing, ``If thou wilt take away thine abominations from before me, thou shalt not migrate;'' that is, I will not cast thee out as I have threatened. Others take the verb {תשוב}, teshub, in the same sense, (for it is the same verb repeated,) ``If thou wilt return, Israel, return to me.'' The Prophet doubtless bids the Israelites to return to God in sincerity, and without any disguise, and not to act falsely with him, as they had often done.

I have as yet mentioned only what others have thought; but, in my judgment, the most suitable rendering is, ``If thou wilt return, Israel, rest in me, ``arrete toi, as we say in French. Rest then in me; and then a definition is given, If thou wilt take away thine abominations (for the copulative is to be taken as expletive or explanatory) from my sight, and wilt not wander What some of those I have referred to have

given as their rendering, ``If thou wilt return to me, Israel, thou shalt rest,'' I wholly reject, as it seems forced: but I allow this reading, ``If thou wilt return, Israel, thou shalt rest in me;'' or this, ``If thou wilt return, Israel, return to me;'' for the difference is not great. The Prophet here evidently condemns the hypocrisy which the Israelites had practiced; for they had often professed themselves as ready to render obedience to God, and afterwards proved that they had made a false profession. Since then deceit and emptiness had been so often found in them, the Prophet demands here, in the name and by the command of God, that they should in truth and sincerity return to him.

If this reading be approved, ``Israel, return to me,'' the intimation is, that they ever took circuitous courses, that they might not return directly to God: for it is usual with hypocrites to make a great show of repentance and at the same time to shun God. If then we follow this reading, the Prophet means this, ``Israel, there is no reason for thee hereafter to think that thou gainest anything by boasting with thy mouth of thy repentance; return to me; know that thou hast to do with God, who is not deceived, as he never deceives any: return then faithfully to me, and let thy conversion be sincere and in no way deceptive.''

But if the verb, {תשוב}, teshub, be taken in the other sense, there would be no great difference in the meaning; ``If thou wilt return, Israel, thou shalt rest in me;'' that is, thou shalt hereafter have nothing to do with idols and with thy perverted ways. Thus the Prophet briefly shews that the return of Israel would be nothing, except they acquiesced in God alone, and wandered not after vain objects, as they had often done. And with this view corresponds what follows, ``Even if thou takest away (for the copulative, as I have said, is to be taken as explanatory) thine abominations from my sight, and wilt wander no more, {תנוד} {ולא}, vela tanud.'' For the vice which Jeremiah meant especially to condemn was this, --- that Israel, while pretending a great show of religion, yet vacillated and did not devote themselves with all their heart to God, but were changeable in their purpose. This vice then is what Jeremiah justly condemns; and hence I am disposed to embrace this view ``Israel, if thou wilt return, rest in me;'' that is, continue constantly faithful to me: but how can this be done? ``Even if thou wilt take away thy abominations, and if thou wilt not wander;'' for thy levity and inconstancy hitherto has been well known. [98]

Whatever view we may take, this passage deserves to be noticed as being against hypocrites, who dare not openly to reject prophetic warnings; but while they shew some tokens of repentance, they still by windings shun the presence of God. They indeed testify by their mouth that they seek God, but yet have recourse to subterfuges: and hence I have said that this passage is remarkably useful, so that we may know that God cannot be pacified by those fallacious trifles which hypocrites bring forward, but that he requires a sincere heart, and that he abominates all dissimulation. It is

[98] The best rendering is that which connects "to me" with the former clause: the end of the verse, as Grotius observes, proves this. If they returned to God, they were to return from captivity; and if they cast away their abominations, they were not to be vagabonds or to wander any more. This seems to be the meaning. The {{ו before {לא} in the last clause is left out in ten MSS., and in the Vulgate, Targum, and Syriac. The verse then would be as follows, --- 1. If thou wilt return, Israel, saith Jehovah, to me, Thou shalt be restored, (that is, from captivity:) If thou wilt remove thy abominations from my sight, Thou shalt not be a wanderer. --- Ed.

therefore expressly said, If thou wilt take away thy abominations from my sight For hypocrites ever regard display and seek to be approved by men, and are satisfied with their approbation; but God calls their attention to himself. It must at the same time be observed, that he cannot be deceived; for he is the searcher of hearts. It follows ---

Jeremiah 4:2

2 And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

2. Et jurabis, vivit Jehova, in veritate, in judicio et in justitia; et benedicent se in eo gentes et in eo gloriabuntur.

Here the Prophet goes on with the same subject; for he denudes these flatteries, by which they thought that God could be pacified: for when they had his name in their mouth, they thought it sufficient for their defense, --- ``What! do we not call upon God? do we not ascribe to him his due honor, when we swear by his name?'' There is in the Prophet's words a part given for the whole; for swearing is to be taken for the whole of God's worship. When therefore the Israelites made a profession of God's name, they thought themselves absolved from all guilt.

Hence the Prophet says, Thou shalt swear truly in the name of God; that is, ``Ye are indeed self --- confident, because an external profession of religion seems to you to be a sort of expiation, whenever ye seek to contend with God: ye boast that you are Abraham's seed, and swear by the name of God; but ye are sacrilegious, when ye thus falsely profess God's name.'' Swear then, he says, in truth

We hence see how the words of the Prophet harmonize together: he had said, that Israel had hitherto dealt falsely with God, because they had not performed what in words they had promised, for they went astray; and now he adds, that it availed the Israelites nothing, that they openly called on God and shewed themselves to be his people by an external worship: this, he says, is nothing, except ye worship God in truth and in judgment and in righteousness

Truth is no doubt to be taken here for integrity, as we shall see in the fifth chapter: it is the same as though he had said, that God is not rightly worshipped, except when the heart is free from all guile and deceit; in short, he means that there is no worship of God without sincerity of heart. But the truth, of which the Prophet speaks, is especially known by judgment and righteousness; that is, when men deal faithfully with one another, and render to all their right, and seek not their own gain at the expense of others. When therefore equity and uprightness are thus observed by men, then is fulfilled what is required here by the Prophet: for then they worship not God fallaciously, nor with vain words, but really shew that they do, without disguise, fear and reverence God.

What follows is variously explained by interpreters; but the Prophet, I have no doubt, does here indirectly reprove the Israelites, because God's name had been exposed to many reproaches and mockeries, when the heathens said, that there was no power in God to help the Israelites, and when the people themselves expostulated with God, as though they had a just cause for contending with him, --- ``What! God has promised that we should be models of his blessing; but we are exposed to

the reproaches of the heathens: how can this be?'' Since then the Israelites thus deplored their lot, and cast the blame on God, the Prophet gives this answer, Bless themselves shall the nations and glory in him Some refer this to the Israelites, but not correctly. It had indeed been said to Abraham, ``In thy seed shall all nations be blessed,'' or, shall bless themselves. But this blessing had its beginning, as it is here noticed by the Prophet. For we must look for the cause or the fountain of this blessing: how could the nations bless themselves through the seed or the children of Abraham, except God, the author of the blessing, manifested his favor towards the children of Abraham? Very aptly then does the Prophet say here, Then bless themselves in God shall all the nations, and in him shall they glory; that is, ``Ye are to be blamed, that God's curse is upon you and renders you objects of reproach to all people, and also, that heathens disdain and despise the name of God: for your impiety has constrained God to deal more severely with you than he wished; for he is ever ready to shew his paternal clemency. What then is the hindrance, that the nations bless not themselves in God and glory in him? that is, that pure religion does not flourish through the whole world, and that all nations do not come to you and unite in the worship of the only true God? The hindrance is your impiety and wickedness; this is the reason why God is not glorified, and why your felicity is not everywhere celebrated among the nations.'' We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet, --- that the Jews groundlessly imputed blame to God, because they were oppressed by so many evils; for they had procured for themselves all their calamities, and at the same time gave occasion to heathens to profane God's name by their reproaches. [99] It follows ---

Jeremiah 4:3

3. For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.

3. Quoniam sic dicit Jehova viro Jehudah (hoc est, Judaeis) et Jerosolymae, Novate vobis novale, et ne seminetis super spinas.

The Prophet still pursues the same subject; for he reproves the hypocrisy of the Israelites, because they sought to discharge their duty towards God only by external ceremonies, while their hearts were full of deceits and of every kind of impiety and wickedness. Hence he says, that God required this from the Jews, --- to plough again the fallow, and not to sow among thorns.

It is a most suitable comparison; for Scripture often compares us to a field, when it represents us as God's heritage; and we have been chosen by God as a peculiar people for this end --- that he may gather fruit from us, as a husbandman gathers produce from his fields. We can indeed add nothing to what God is; but there is a fruit which he demands; so that our whole life is to be devoted to his glory. God then would not have us to be idle and fruitless, but to bring forth some fruit. But

[99] This is a very lucid and satisfactory exposition. The import of the passage is very clearly given. A simpler version may be made, and such as will exhibit the meaning more plainly. When two vaus occur, they may often be rendered, when and then: so here, — 2. When thou shalt swear, "Live does Jehovah," In truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; Then call him blessed shall nations, And in him shall they glory. To swear is to avow Jehovah as our God. The verbs "bless" and "glory" are both in Hithpael, which has commonly a reciprocal sense, but not always. See Psalm 72:17; Psalm 105:3. This and the preceding verse belong to the last chapter. — Ed.

what is done by hypocrites? They sow; that is, they shew some concern, yea, they pretend great ardor, when God exhorts them to repent, or when he invites them. They then make a great bustle; yet they mar everything by their own mixtures, the same as though one scattered his seed among thorns: but it will be of no avail thus to cast seed among thorns; for the ground ought to be well cleared and prepared. Hence God laughs to scorn this preposterous care and diligence, in which hypocrites pride themselves, and says, that they busy themselves without any advantage; for it is the same, as though an husbandman had wholly lost his seed; for when the ground is full of briers and thorns, the seed, though it may grow for a time, cannot yet bring forth fruit. For this reason God bids the Israelites to plough the fallows; [100] as though he had said, that they were like a rough ground, which is full of thorns, and that therefore there was need of unusual and by no means a common cultivation; for when thorns and briers grow in a field, of what benefit will it be to cast seed there? Nay, a field cannot be well prepared by the plough alone, so that it may produce fruit; but much labor is also necessary, as is the case with fallow ground, which is called essarter in our language.

The Prophet then intimates that the people had become hardened in their vices, and that they were not only full of vices, like a field left uncultivated for two years; but that their vices were so deep, that they could not be well cleared away by ploughing alone, except they were drawn up by the roots, as they were like thorns and brambles, which have been growing in a field for many years. We hence see, that not only impiety and contempt of God, and other sins of the people of Israel, are referred to by the Prophet, but also their perverseness; for they had so hardened themselves for many years in their vices, that there was need not only of the plough, but also of other instruments to tear up the thorns, to eradicate those vices which had formed deep roots. As then, he had before warned them, that they would labor in vain except they returned to God with sincerity of heart and acquiesced in him; so here he bids them to examine their life, that they might not cast away their seed, like hypocrites, who formally acknowledge their sins. Hence he bids them wholly to shake off their vices, which were hid within, according to what they do, who tear up thorns and briers in a field, which has been long neglected, and left without being cultivated. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 4:4

4 Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

4. Circumcidimini Jehovae, et auferte praeputia cordis vestri, viri Jehudah et incolae Jerusalem; ne egrediatur tanquam ignis furor meus, et accendatur, et nemo extinguat, propter (a facie, ad verbum) malitiam actionum vestrarum.

The Prophet expresses here more clearly what he had before said metaphorically or by a figure; for he had bidden them to eradicate their vices, according to what is usually done by breaking up the fallow ground; but now dropping that figure, he

[100] Literally, "Plough for yourselves the ploughing," or, the plough-land; or, "Fallow for yourselves the fallow." They were not to sow a land once ploughed; but they were to plough again. — Ed.

clearly shews what was to be done, and yet the clause contains what is figurative. He calls their attention to circumcision, which was a symbol of renovation, as though he had said, --- That they sufficiently understood what they were to do, except they were wholly unteachable; ``For why, ``he says, ``has circumcision been enjoined? Does not God by this symbol shew, that if a man rightly aspires after true religion, he ought to begin by putting off all the evil propensities of his flesh? Is he not to deny himself, and to die as it were both to himself and to the world? for circumcision includes all this.'' Then the Prophet shews that the Israelites had no excuse, that they went not astray through mistake or through ignorance; but they were acting perversely and deceitfully with God; for circumcision, by which they had been initiated into God's service, sufficiently taught them, that God is not rightly nor faithfully served, except when men deny themselves.

We now then see what the Prophet meant by these words, when he bids them to be circumcised to God, and to take away the foreskin of their heart: Be ye circumcised, he says, to Jehovah Circumcision was their great boast; but only before men; for nothing but ambition and vanity ruled in them, while they openly exulted and boasted that they were God's holy and peculiar people. Hence the Prophet bids them not to value what was of no importance, but to become circumcised to Jehovah; that is, he bids them not to seek applause before the world, but seriously to consider that they had to do with God. And hence he adds, Take away the foreskin of your heart, as though he had said, ``When God commanded the seed of Abraham to be circumcised, (Genesis 17:10-12,) it was not his object to have a small portion of skin cut off, but he had regard to something higher, even that ye should be circumcised in heart.''

The Prophet, in short, teaches us here what Paul has more clearly explained, (Romans 2:29,) even this, --- that the letter is of no value before God, but that the spirit is what he requires: for Paul in these words means, that the external sign is worthless, except accompanied by the reality within; for the literal circumcision mentioned by Paul is merely the external rite; in the same manner baptism with us may be called the letter, when there is no repentance and faith. But the spirit, or spiritual circumcision, is the denial of self; it is renovation, and in a word, that true conversion to God, of which the Prophet speaks here. Nor has Moses been silent on this point; for in the tenth chapter of Deuteronomy he shews that the Jews greatly deceived themselves, if they thought that they did all that God required, when they were circumcised in the flesh; ``Circumcise, ``he says, ``your hearts to the Lord.'' He indeed reminds us in another place, that this is altogether the work of God; but though God circumcises the heart, yet this exhortation, that men are to circumcise themselves, is not superfluous: and the same is the case with baptism; for when Paul exhorts the faithful to fear God and to lead a holy life, he refers to baptism. It is yet certain that men do not bestow on themselves what God signifies by the sign of baptism; but he counsels them to seek from God the grace of his Spirit, that they might not in vain be sealed by the external rite of baptism, while destitute of its reality. When therefore the Prophet bids the Israelites to take away the foreskin of their heart, it is the same as though he had said, that they were indeed liberal

enough with regard to ceremonies and outward worship, but that these were empty masks unless preceded by a right disposition within.

And he addresses the Jews, and also the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for they thought that they far excelled the Israelites, on whom God had inflicted so grievous a punishment. He then shews that the tribe of Judah, nay, that the very inhabitants and citizens of Jerusalem were not better than others, and that they could not be exempted, as it were, by privilege, except they returned to a right mind, except they seasonably and from the heart repented.

He then adds, Lest my fury go forth like fire The Prophet here expressly declares, that the Jews were not to wait until God came forth as an avenger; for then, he says, if, would be too late to repent: in short, he bids them to anticipate in due time the judgment of God; for if once his fury went forth, it would burn like fire so as to consume them, and there would be no extinguishing of it. But if they repented, he holds forth to them the hope of pardon; for the fury of God had not yet gone forth.

He afterwards subjoins, On account of the wickedness of your deeds [101] By these words the Prophet again reproves them sharply, and shews that they gained nothing by their evasions; for when God ascends his tribunal and begins to execute his vengeance, then all vain excuses will come to an end, such as, that they deserved no such thing, or, that the atrocity of their sins was not great: ``God, ``he says, ``will, with his own hand, teach you how grievous has been the atrocity of your vices; he will not, then, deal with you in words.'' It then follows ---

Jeremiah 4:5-6

5. Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defenced cities.

5. Nuntiate (vel, promulgate) in Jehudah, et Jerusalem facite audire, (hoc est, publicate,) et dicite et clangite tuba in terra; vocate, colligite et dicite, Congregamini, et intremus civitates munitas.

6. Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction.

6. Tollite signum (vel, vexilium) in Sion; congregamini (vel, confugite; alii vertunt, viriliter agite, deducunt enim hoc verbum ab {זעע}, sed plures sequuntur diversum sensum ab {זוע}, quod est fugere, vel, se colligere metus causa,) ne stetis (vel, non stabitis,) quoniam malum ego accerso (venire facio) ab aquilone, et contritionem magnam.

Jeremiah treats his own people here with more severity, for he saw that they were refractory, and so obstinate in their vices, that they could not by wise counsels be restored to the way of safety. Hence he addresses them here as men wholly irreclaimable, and to whom instruction proved useless. But though according to the manner of the prophets, he sounds a trumpet for the sake of filling them with terror, he seems yet to speak tauntingly, when he bids them to proclaim in Judah, and to publish in Jerusalem; as though he had said, When distress shall seize you, you will

[101] Rather, "On account of the evil of your doings." Their doings were evil or wrong, both as to God and man. Impiety seems to be the special evil intended, as their defection from God had been more particularly referred to. — Ed.

then by experience perceive that God is angry with you: though to --- day ye believe not my warnings; yet that God may not, indeed, by a violent hand, bring you back to himself, and as ye seek evasions for yourselves, ye shall sound the trumpet, and proclaim, ``The enemies are coming, and are nigh at hand; let, therefore, every one flee to Jerusalem, and enter into the city, and resort unto Zion: ``that is, ``If we cannot secure our safety in the city, we shall at least be safe in the fortress of Sion.'' But God, he says, brings an evil on you from the north; and whatever ye may think will be for your safety will be wholly useless. It is, however, proper, especially to regard the Prophet as God's herald proclaiming war; and that though he exults over their perverseness, he yet declares that such would be everywhere the terror, that they would seek safety by flight.

Sound, he says, in Judah, and publish, or proclaim, in Jerusalem, ({הגידו}, egidu, announce, literally.) He speaks not here for the same purpose as Joel did, (Joel 1:1, 15,) when he bade them to sound the trumpet; for the latter exhorted the people to repent; but Jeremiah, as I have already said, tauntingly reproves here the people for their obstinacy and perverseness; as though he had said, ``I see what ye will do, when God's vengeance shall come upon you, that ye may not even then repent; for ye will sound the trumpet through the whole land, `Let all resort to Sion;' as though ye could resist there your enemies, and preserve your lives.'' He does not, then, bid them to sound the trumpet, but, on the contrary, shews what they would do.

Some improperly give this rendering, ``Fulfill ye, ``but the common version is, ``Assemble yourselves.'' But interpreters seem not to me to have regarded the etymology of the word; for it is of the same meaning in Hebrew as when we say, Amassez-vous, Gather yourselves. And say, Be ye assembled, and let us go into fortified cities It will, indeed, be announced to you to seek hiding --- places to protect you from the assaults of your enemies; if so, Raise a banner in Sion, and flee; but God will at the same time bring evil on you from the north

The words {תעמדו-}{אל}, al-tomedu, may be explained in two ways, --- ``Stand not,'' that is, ``Hasten quickly,'' as it is the case with those in extreme fear; or, ``Ye shall not stand,'' that is, ``Though ye may seek a firm position on Mount Sion, ye shall not yet be able to continue there.'' The first exposition appears to me the best, as it is more suitable to the context. [102]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cease not daily to alienate ourselves from thee by our sins, and as thou yet kindly exhortest us to repent, and promisest to be appeasable and propitious to us, --- O grant, that we may not perversely go on in our sins, and be ungrateful to thee for thy great kindness; but that we may so return to thee, that our whole life may testify that our repentance has been unfeigned, and that we may so acquiesce in thee alone, that the depraved lusts of our flesh may

[102] These two verses contain a very spirited address, in a style truly poetical, — 5. Announce ye in Judah, And in Jerusalem publish, and say, — Yea, sound the trumpet in the land, Proclaim, do it fully, and say, — "Be assembled, and let us enter into fortified cities; 6. Raise a banner towards Sion; Hasten ye, stay not:" For an evil am I bringing from the north, And a great destruction. The people of Judah were summoned to enter into fortified cities, and Mount Sion was to be the resort of the inhabitants of Jerusalem: "Hasten ye," {σπεύσατε} --- hasten, Septuagint. This is the meaning of {עז} in Hiphil. See Exodus 9:19; Isaiah 10:31. In Jeremiah 6:1, it is translated ``Gather yourselves to flee;'' but ``hasten,'' or remove vigorously or quickly, would be the best rendering. --- Ed

not draw us here and there, but that we may continue fixed and immovable in our purpose, and so labor to obey thee through the whole course of our life, that we may at length partake of the fruit of our obedience in thy celestial kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifteenth

Jeremiah 4:7

7. The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant.

7. Ascendit leo ex densitate sua (hoc est, ex oculto loco,) et vastator gentium profectus est; egressus est e loco sue ad ponendum (ut ponat) terram tuam in vastitatem, urbes tuae perdentur, ut non sit habitator.

The Prophet more fully declares the import of the threatening which we briefly considered yesterday; for God said in the former verse, that he would bring an evil from the north; and the kind of evil it was to be he now describes, and compares the king of Babylon to a lion; and afterwards, without a figure, he calls him the destroyer of nations

By the similitude of lion he means that the Israelites would not be able to resist; and when he adds that he would be the desolator of nations, he intimates that they would perish with the rest: for if Nebuchadnezzar was sufficiently able to destroy many nations, how could the Jews escape a similar calamity? He shall come, he says, the desolator of nations But he uses the past tense throughout, in order to shew the certainty of the prediction, and thus to shake secure men with fear, who had become torpid in their hypocrisy; for they would have otherwise deemed all threatenings as nothing: for as long as God spared them, they despised his judgment, and promised themselves impunity in their sins. Hence the Prophet, in order to awake them, set the matter before them, as though Nebuchadnezzar had already come with a strong and powerful army to lay waste Judea; for he says, that a lion had ascended from his hiding --- places: but the term for the last word means an entangled density, as when trees are entwined together, or when a place is filled with thorns. [103]

But the similitude is most suitable, because the Jews never thought that the king of Babylon would come forth from places so remote; for the passing through was difficult, and the expedition attended with great toil: yet the Prophet says, that the lion would come from his recesses, and that nothing would hinder him from breaking forth and coming to the open country. He at last concludes by saying, that the cities would be laid waste, [104] so as to be without an inhabitant It now follows ---

Jeremiah 4:8

8. For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the Lord is not turned back from us.

8. Super hoc accingite vos saccis, plangite et ululate; quia non aversus est furor

[103] The word "thicket, "in our version, correctly expresses it; a tangled wood, where trees cross and entwine with each other. — Ed.

[104] "Laid waste" is the Chaldee sense; but the verb means in Hebrew to germinate, to produce grass, to grow over with grass as ruined cities do. The words which follow, "without an inhabitant," shew that this meaning suits here, — Thy cities shall grow over with grass, without an inhabitant. The Targum is, Thy cities shall be desolate without an inhabitant. — Ed.

irae Jehovae a nobis.

The Prophet seems not yet to exhort his own nation to repent: a more gracious doctrine will presently follow; but here he only reminds them that a most grievous mourning was nigh at hand; for he saw that they were hypocrites, immersed in their own delusions, and could not be assailed by any fear. Hence he says, that they were greatly mistaken, if they thought themselves safe while God was angry with them.

Gird yourselves in sackcloth, he says, lament and howl; and then follows the reason, because the fury of God's wrath was not turned away from them. We indeed know, that the ungodly are wont to make God subservient to themselves, as though they could by their perverseness turn aside or drive afar off his judgment, and restrain, as it were, his hand from acting. As, then, hypocrites are insolent towards God, the Prophet says expressly that the fury of his wrath was not turned away: and thus he warns them, that they would be in every way miserable until they were reconciled to God.

We now understand the design of the Prophet; for he confirms what the last verse contains, when he said that a lion had come forth, and that a desolator was already nigh; yea, he confirms what he had said, for there was no hope to them without having God propitious, and he declares that God was angry. Hence it follows, that all things would prove infelicitous to them.

Jeremiah 4:9

9. And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the LORD, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder.

9. Et erit die illo, dicit Jehova, peribit cor Regis et cor procerum, et obstupescent sacerdotes, et prophetae mirabuntur (vel, attoniti erunt).

As the royal dignity still continued with the Jews, though their power was greatly diminished, they, relying on that distinction, hoped that they had a sufficient protection: hence it was, that they were not moved by any denunciation; for the royal power, which remained not altogether secure, and yet so in some degree, was to them like a shield. We also know what pride filled the courtiers; for they extolled their kings, and thus made a show of their prudence and magnanimity. Since, then, this foolish notion of the chief men respecting their king, and their delusive boasting, deceived the Jews, the Prophet says, In that day perish shall the heart of the king, and the heart of the princes

By heart he no doubt means the understanding or the mind, as the word is to be taken in many other places. Moses says,

``God has not yet given you a heart to understand.''
(Deuteronomy 29:4.)

The Latins also call men ``hearted'' (cordatos) who excel in intelligence and wisdom. [105] So, then, the Prophet shews, that it was a vain and deceptive fancy for the people to expect that the king would be an invincible defense to them; for ``the king, ``he says, ``shall then be deprived of understanding and reason; and the counselors,

[105] Though the most common meaning of {,{לב heart, is what is here stated, yet it means also strength, firmness, courage. See Deuteronomy 20:2, 3; 2 Samuel 17:10; Psalm 22:14; Psalm 73:26. And this meaning is most suitable to this passage. --- Ed

who lay claim to understanding, shall be found then to be wholly foolish: there is, then, no ground for that vain confidence which deceives you.'' The Prophet briefly intended to shake off that false confidence, by which the Jews were inebriated, when they thought that there was a sure safety in the intelligence of the king and princes.

He says the same thing respecting the priests as well as the prophets, as much glory belonged to the priestly order; for the tribe of Levi had not taken that honor to itself, but God himself had set priests over the people. Hence an opinion prevailed, that the priests could not be without understanding and wisdom. With regard to the prophets, Jeremiah no doubt conceded the name to impostors, who falsely professed the name of God; and this way of speaking is common in the writings of the prophets. He does not, then, mean those true and faithful ministers of God, who duly executed their office, but those who boasted of the name and title: and he says of these, that they would be astonished [106]

He, in short, deprives the people of that false confidence, through which they hardened themselves, so as not to fear God's judgment.

But this passage is entitled to special notice, because it shews that God's grace is not to be tied either to ranks of men or to titles. The prophetic office had always been in high repute; nor was the priestly without honor, for it was founded on God's command; but Jeremiah nevertheless declares, that there would be no understanding in the priests and in the prophets, because they would become stupefied and astonished. And with regard to the king, we know that he was the representative of Christ; and yet he pronounces the same thing of the king, and also of his counselors, --- that they would be made blind by the just vengeance of God, so as not to see anything. he afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 4:10

10. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul.

10. Et dixi, Ha, ha, Domine Jehova, certe decipiendo decepisti populum hunc et Jerosolymam, dicendo, Pax erit vobis; et pertigit gladius usque ad animam (tamen pertigit, nam hic copula vice adversativae ponitur)

Some so understand this passage as though the Prophet brought forward what was said by the people; for all the most wicked, when oppressed by God's hand, usually cast the blame on him, and in their complaints contend and dispute with him. Hence they think that the Prophet here, not in his own person, but in that of the whole people, speaks thus: ``O Lord, what can this be? thou surely hast deceived us.'' Others give somewhat a looser explanation, that the Prophet here indirectly expostulates with God, because he had suffered the false prophets to flatter the people so as to stupefy the minds of all. But a different meaning is what I approve of: the Prophet, I think, tauntingly exposes those false adulations, by which the prophets had caused the ruin of the miserable Jews, by promising them God's forgiveness, and

[106] The verse is as follows, — And it shall be in that day, saith Jehovah, That perish shall the heart of the king And the heart of the princes, And confounded shall be the priests, And the prophets shall be astonished. “Confounded,” that is, like persons at their wit’s end, not knowing what to do, or what course to take. “Astonished,” or amazed, that is, at witnessing the reverse of what they had prophesied; being filled with stunning and stupefying amazement. — Ed.

by ever announcing favorable predictions.

God no doubt rendered the Jews their just reward, when he suffered them to be deceived by impostors: we, indeed, know that the world is ever afflicted with this disease, --- that they seek flatteries, as God upbraids them by Micah:

``Ye seek prophets who promise to you an abundant harvest, an abundant vintage.''
(Micah 2:11)

Since, then, the Jews wished their vices to be spared, and not only disliked their faithful and severe reprovers, but also hated them, they had deserved to be thus dealt with: it was God's will that many impostors should assume the prophetic name. Thus it happened, that the Jews thought that their peaceable condition would be perpetual; and this, as I have said, is usual with hypocrites. Now the Prophet, in a biting strain, exposes here these deceptions, and says, Ah, ah, Jehovah! surely thou hast deceived this people: for the Prophet does not speak in the person of the people, nor does he complain, that God permitted so much liberty to false prophets; but he derides these impostors as well as the people. And further, as they were all deaf, he turns to God, as though he had said, ``Behold, Lord, worthy of this reward are they, who have sought flatteries, and have not attended to the holy warnings of thy servants: as, then, no kind of correction was what they could endure, let them now begin to learn that they have been deceived by others rather than by thee.'' [107]

We then see that the Prophet ridicules that stupidity in which the Jews had been so long asleep; and the simple meaning is, that he turned to God: I have said, O Lord Jehovah, surely thou hast deceived this people. ``Surely'' is to be taken in an ironical sense; that is, ``It now really appears that they have been deceived; but by whom? They wish, indeed, to throw the blame on thee; but they are justly chargeable with foolish credulity, so that they, whom the false prophets have deceived, have been rightly dealt with.'' What they said was, Peace shall be to you

This never came from the mouth of God; for Jeremiah daily thundered and threatened approaching ruin; for he was like a celestial herald, who filled every place with terror; but he was not heard: and at the same time the Jews praised the false prophets, who soothed them with various promises. We hence perceive, that God had not spoken peace to them; but that the Jews, not only willingly, but with avidity, laid hold on those things by which the false prophets sought to gratify them.

He afterwards adds, And reached has the sword unto the soul; that is, ``Yet we are now destroyed by fatal evils.'' The Prophet here indirectly sets before them those delusive flatteries with which the Jews pleased themselves, and shews that they would at length really find how falsely they pretended the name of God. It follows ---

[107] There are various expositions of this verse: but the simpler and the plainer mode would be to take {{אמר as a noun, word, speech, saying, with an auxiliary verb, which is commonly omitted in Hebrew. The connection with the foregoing would be obvious and natural, --- And the saying will be, ``Alas! Lord Jehovah, Surely, deceiving thou hast deceived This people and Jerusalem, By saying, `Peace shall be to you;' And reach does the sword even to the soul.'' This would be the language of such as believed the false prophets, and considered them as sent by God. But Lowth, Henry, Venema, Scott, and others, take this view, --- that God had permitted or suffered the people to be deceived by the false prophets. It is said that this verb in Hiphil, as the case is here, has sometimes this meaning, and Lowth refers, as instances, to Isaiah 63:17, and also to Psalm 119:10; Proverbs 10:3. But the sentiment of the passage in this case would not be very suitable: for, according to this view, the cause of the Prophet's grief is, that God had suffered the people to be deceived. ``It shall be said,'' in the next verse, seems to be put in contrast with this ``saying.'' Instead of what would be commonly said of the people, God reminds them of what he would cause to be said and effected. --- Ed.

Jeremiah 4:11-12

11. At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse,

11. In tempore illo dicetur populo huic (hoc est, de populo hoc; {ל} enim hic accipitur pro (,{ב} et de Jerusalem, ventus siccus (alii transferunt, vehementem) in excelsis deserti (in deserto, ad verbum,) versus viam filiae populi mei, non ad spargendum, neque ad purgandum;

12. Even a full wind from those places shall come unto me: now also will I give sentence against them.

12. Ventus plenior illis veniet mihi: nunc etiam ego loquar judicia cum illis (hoc est, proferam judicia cum illis.)

Jeremiah proceeds with the same prediction: he says, that a terrible wind was coming, which would not only disperse or clear away, but dissipate and overthrow all things. He then expresses how great and how grievous would be the calamity which he had before mentioned. He compares it to dry or and wind; for {צח}, tsach, sometimes means ``clear,'' and sometimes ``arid,'' as the greatest dryness is found on high places. He means, no doubt, here the wind, which is violent, and disturbs the whole atmosphere, when there are no clouds, and where no trees impede its course. Hence, he speaks of high and desert places. It is the same as though he had said, that so great would be the violence of God's vengeance, and so irresistible would be the eruption, that it would be like a violent wind when it passes through high regions and through dry land or desert places. He says, Towards the way of the daughter of my people; as though he had said, --- that the course of the wind would be such as to bear directly on Judea. The mode of speaking here used is well known to all who are in any degree acquainted with the writings of the prophets. ``The daughter of my people, ``means the people themselves. Come, then, shall wind towards Judea.

He then adds, Not to scatter nor to cleanse Husbandmen are wont to winnow the corn when taken from the thrashing --- floor, that the chaff may be carried away by the wind: but the Prophet says, that this wind would not be to clear away or scatter the chaff; for it will be, he says, a very vehement wind He means, in short, that God would shew so much displeasure towards the Jews, that he would no longer chastise them in a moderate degree, or use any moderation, as he had done previously; for God had already often punished the Jews, but had hitherto acted the part of a physician, having endeavored to heal the vices of the people. As, then, these corrections had been without fruit, the Prophet now says, that God's wrath would now come, not to cleanse as before, nor to scatter the chaff, but to consume everything among the people. Hence he adds (for the two verses are connected together) a fuller wind, or one more complete, shall come to them. Some read, ``from these places, ``so they render {מ}; but it is rather to be taken as noting the comparative degree, --- that this wind would be much rougher and more violent than other winds which usually clear the land or scatter away the chaff, and separate it from the corn: come, then, shall a much more violent wind

And come, he says, unto me God, I doubt not, speaks here. Some think that the

Prophet here represents the whole body of the people; and they consider them as saying, that there would come a wind which would rush on themselves. But this is too strained; and further, this explanation is disproved by the context: nor can what follows be applied to the Prophet, I will now pronounce judgments against them Here then God, in his office as a judge, declares that a wind was nigh, by which he would dissipate and overthrow the whole of Judea, and would no more cleanse it. And thus he shews, that the Chaldeans would not of themselves come, but would be sent to execute his orders; as though he had said, --- that he would be the author of those calamities which were impending over the Jews: come, then, shall wind unto me; that is, it will be ready to obey my orders.

And he adds at last, by way of an exposition, I will then speak judgments with them To speak judgments is to execute the office of a judge, or to call to judgment, or to summon men to declare their cause, as kings are said to speak judgments when they constrain the guilty to render an account, of themselves. God briefly intimates, that he had hitherto exercised great forbearance towards the Jews; but that as he found that his indulgence availed nothing, except that they became more and more ferocious, he declares, that he would now become their judge to punish their wickedness. [108] He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 4:13

13. Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled.

13. Ecce tanquam nubes ascendet, et tanquam turbo currus ejus; celeriores aquilis equi ejus: vae nobis, quia perditi sumus.

The Prophet here concludes the prediction which referred to the dreadful vengeance that was coming; and he mentions here several similitudes, such as might rouse the Jews and constrain them to fear. He says, that the chariots of God would come as clouds and as a whirlwind; and then that his horses would be swifter than eagles

As to the clouds, the whirlwind, and the eagles, (for the import of the three similitudes is the same,) the Prophet no doubt intended thus to set forth the quickness of God's vengeance; but yet there is some difference. We see how clouds suddenly arise and spread over the whole heaven; and thus it happens when a whirlwind is in the air. Hence when he compares God's chariots to clouds and the whirlwind, it is the

[108] The Septuagint version of these two verses is as foreign to the original as it can well be; and the Syriac and Arabic are nearly the same. The Vulgate gives a fair version; and the meaning, as given by the Targum, is nearly the same. The latter part of the 11th and 12th are thus rendered by Blayney, — A wind that scorcheth the plains in the wilderness, [Shall come] toward the daughter of my people, Not to winnow, nor to cleanse; 12. A full wind for a curse shall come at my bidding; Now even I will proceed judicially with them. Horsley differs as to the 11th verse, and renders it thus, — The wind that scorcheth the craggy rocks of the wilderness Taketh its course against the daughter of my people, Not for winnowing or cleansing. The reason assigned for rendering {{מאלה for ``a curse,'' and not ``from those places,`` as in our version, is, because the enemy did not come from that quarter. But this may be avoided, if we consider ``as'' or ``like'' to be understood before wind, which is no uncommon thing in Hebrew. To refer ``those'' or these to the winds implied in winnowing and cleansing, as Calvin does, and also Gataker and others, is not satisfactory, I would propose the following version, --- The dry wind of the cliffs in the wilderness Is advancing against the daughter of my people, Not to winnow, nor to cleanse; 12. As a full wind from these, it shall come for me: Then will I myself pronounce judgments on them. The word ,{דרך} as Horsley takes it, is a verb, or rather a participle; and it is usual in Hebrew to put a participle in the first clause, and in the second a verb, as here, in the future tense. The verb means to come upon, so as to tread down or subdue, Judges 5:21; Judges 20:43; Psalm 91:13. ``The effect of this wind is not only to render the air extremely hot and scorching, but to fill it with poisonous and suffocating vapors.'' --- Blayney. --- Ed.

same as if he had said, that the beginning of the calamity would be sudden, because God would unexpectedly arise, after having been apparently asleep for a long time. But when he says, that God's horses would be swifter than eagles, he means, that it would be easy for God, when once he had begun, to destroy the whole of Judea, as it were in a moment, or at least in a very short time; for we know how swift is the flying of the eagle; but he says, that the horses of God would be swifter than the eagles.

We now understand the Prophet's meaning: for when the Jews derided the threatenings of the Prophets, they tauntingly used such a language as this, --- ``O! we shall, at least in the meantime, feast cheerfully and joyfully; these Prophets will not allow us a truce for one hour; but yet many years will pass away before the evil overtakes us.'' We find profane men in our day, who in like manner trifle with God: and when they cannot wholly despise what God threatens, they yet delay the time, and think that they gain something by putting off the day of vengeance. This, then, was the reason why the Prophet said, that God's chariots would ascend, as clouds arise suddenly, and then as a whirlwind in clear sky, and lastly, in a manner swifter than the eagles, even in their swiftest course.

The Prophet, in the last place, exclaims, in the name of the whole people, Woe to us! for we are lost [109] He speaks here concisely, that he might shew that the false prophets, as well as the people, were going astray to their own ruin, while they were asleep in their vices, and thought their insensibility would escape punishment. He hence exclaims, that though all were then seized with stupor, the people themselves were yet lost. It at length follows ---

Jeremiah 4:14

14. O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?

14. Munda a malitia cor tuum, Jerusalem, ut salva sis: quousque manebunt in medio tui cogitationes vanitatis tuae? (alii vertunt, doloris tui; alii, concupiscentiae tuae; alii, iniquitatis, ac si esset {עונך}.)

Here now the Prophet expressly and avowedly exhorts the people to repent. By bidding Jerusalem to wash from wickedness her heart, that she might be saved, he shews that there was no remedy, except the Jews were reconciled to God; and that this could not be, except they repented of their sins. He had said before, that while God was angry they could not but perish; he now confirms the same thing, --- that thou mayest be saved, wash thine heart from wickedness; as though he had said, that there was war between the Jews and God, and that salvation could by no means be hoped for, since God was armed for their destruction, and shewed himself a judge to punish their vices: he at the same time reminds them of the true way of repentance; it was by washing their heart from wickedness. For hypocrites ever seek to appease God by external rites and observances; but the Prophet shows that

[109] Rather, "We have been wholly wasted," or desolated. The verb is in a reduplicate form, and signifies an entire waste or desolation, — 13. Behold, like clouds will he ascend, And like a whirlwind will be his chariots, Swifter than eagles his horses: "Woe to us! for we have been wholly wasted." The mixture of the tenses is intended to shew the certainty of the event. Or we may consider the last line as containing what would be said after the coming of the enemy. What they would have to say was to acknowledge their entire desolation. — Ed.

God cannot be pacified, except they from the heart return to him. He then means that the beginning of true repentance is an inward feeling. We now perceive what the Prophet means.

But they reason foolishly who maintain that repentance is the cause of salvation, because it is said, ``That thou mayest be saved, wash thy heart from wickedness:'' and the Papists lay hold on such passages to set up free --- will; and they hold that sins are abolished and punishment remitted through satisfactions made by us. But this is extremely absurd and frivolous. For the Prophet is not speaking of the cause of salvation; but, as I have said, he simply shows that men are extremely thoughtless when they expect a peaceable condition, while they carry on war with God, and when he is armed to execute vengeance on them. We are not then to inquire here, whether a sinner delivers himself from God's hand by his repentance: but the Prophet had only this one thing in view --- that we cannot be safe and secure, except God be reconciled to us. He further shews, that God will not be propitious to us, except we repent, and that from the heart or from a genuine feeling within.

He then adds, How long shall remain within thee the thoughts of thy vanity? He here touches on the hypocrisy of his own nation; and he in effect says, that whatever excuses they might make, they were yet proved guilty before God, and that their evasions were frivolous, because God penetrated into the inmost recesses of their hearts. He indeed speaks most suitably, for he had to do with hypocrites who thought that their outward performances pacified God; and they also thought that when they alleged their evasions they ought to be forgiven, as they could not be condemned by earthly judges. The Prophet derides these delusive thoughts, How long shall thoughts of vanity remain within thee? that is, ``Though the whole world were to absolve thee, what yet would it avail thee? For vain thoughts remain in the midst of thee, that is, in the recesses of thy heart; and God knows them, for nothing is hid from him. There is then no reason for you to think that ye will gain anything by your outward display or your excuses; for God is the searcher of hearts. Let not these thoughts continue within thee.''

He calls them the thoughts of vanity The word, {און}, aun, means sometimes substance, but, it also means power, and sometimes grief, and sometimes vanity or trouble. The Prophet means here, I have no doubt, trouble or vanity. But some expound it as signifying lust; but I know not whether it can be so taken. Either of the two foregoing meanings may suit the passage, though vanity seems the best, How long, then, shall thoughts of vanity remain within thee? that is, by which thou deceivest thyself: for when God suspended his vengeance, the Jews thought that they had escaped from his hand. [110] They might, at the same time, have been

[110] The word means also iniquity, wickedness: and this is the sense in which the Vulgate and the Targum have taken it, and also Blayney, "the devices of thine iniquity:" and this corresponds more with the former part of the verse. The whole is as follows, — 14. Wash from evil thine heart, O Jerusalem, that thou mayest be saved: How long shall lodge within thee The thoughts of thy wickedness, Or, Thy wicked thoughts. The word for "wash" here, according to Parkhurst, is ever applied to express a thorough washing, the washing away of what is inherent, such as the dirt of linen and of clothes: and he says, that there is another word, {,{רחף which is used when the washing of the surface of anything is intended, such as the washing of hands. ``Shall lodge,'' --- it is no objection that this is singular, and the ``thoughts'' plural. It is an idiom: the same exists in Welsh: and in no other form would this sentence be rendered in that language. The present translation is incorrect, as the verb is taken to be in the second person, and applied to Jerusalem; which cannot be, as in that case it must have been in the feminine gender. The correct rendering would be, --- Pa hyd

called the thoughts of trouble or sorrow from the effect; for how could it have been otherwise, but they must have found that they had procured a heavier judgment for themselves, by trifling with the indulgence and forbearance of God? Too strained is the explanation given by some, who render the words, ``thoughts of grief, ``because the Jews had done many wrongs to their neighbors, and caused them unjust vexations. I therefore doubt not but that the Prophet refers to those deceptive hopes, by which the Jews grew more perverse against God, so as not to fear any punishment.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou art pleased daily to invite us to repentance, and since our own conscience is a witness, how we have in various ways provoked thy vengeance, --- O grant, that we may not remain obstinate in our sins, nor harden our minds by perverse delusions, but suffer ourselves to be subdued by thy word, and so offer ourselves to thee with a pure and sincere heart, that our whole life may be nothing else but a striving for that newness which thou requirest; so that, being consecrated to thee in mind and body, we may ever labor to glorify thy name, until we be made partakers of that glory, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy only --- begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Sixteenth

Jeremiah 4:15

15. For a voice declareth from Dan, and publisheth affliction from mount Ephraim.

15. Quia vox annuntians e Dan, et promulgans cladem (vel, poenam) e monte Ephraim (alii vertunt, iniquitatem {און}).

The Prophet again repeats what he had said, --- that the Jews were given up, on account of their perverseness, to final ruin; for they had so often and for so long a time provoked God, and had not attended to pious admonitions, when God by his servants the prophets offered pardon to them on their repentance. But the whole passage, which I shall now explain, gives a lively representation of the ruin that was at hand; for we see that in this verse there is a scene presented to us, as the Prophet sets before our eyes what could not be fully expressed in words.

A voice, he says, declares from Daniel This was the extreme border on the north He had before said, that an evil was coming from that quarter, that is, from the north; for God had chosen the Chaldeans as the executors of his vengeance: hence he says, ``a voice is heard from Dan;'' not that there was an army already prepared to attack the Jews, but Jeremiah speaks here by the prophetic spirit; and he sets the event as present before the Jews, who thought not that so grievous an evil was nigh. For we said yesterday, that when God for a time spares hypocrites, they become more hardened, and with haughty contempt deride his prophets. When, therefore, Jeremiah saw that he had to do with blocks, he deemed it necessary to use figurative language, which exhibited to them more clearly that the judgment, which the Jews imagined they had no reason to fear, was near at hand: hence he says, a voice is heard from Dan

And proclaims {און}, aun, that is, trouble, or punishment, or ruin. The other rendering, to which I have referred, is not suitable. The word {און}, aun, does indeed

y hetya o'th fewn Dy feddyliau drygionus! If the verb had followed its nominative case, it would have been in the same number; but as it precedes it, it is singular while the noun is plural. --- Ed.

properly signify iniquity; but it is to be taken here for punishment. [111] But whenever the Prophets use this term, they intimate that evil is not inflicted by God except for just causes; and they remind us that its source or fountain is to be found in the wickedness of men. Ruin then was coming from Mount Ephraim which was near the tribe of Judah and also Jerusalem. But it was the same as though Jeremiah had said, that God was now thundering from heaven, and that it would be of no avail to the Jews to close their ears: for though they were even deaf, yet God's vengeance would soon come to light, accompanied with dreadful noise. It follows ---

Jeremiah 4:16

16. Make ye mention to the nations; behold, publish against Jerusalem, that watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah.

16. Memorate in gentibus (vel, ad gentes,) ecce promulgate super Jerusalem, obsessores veniunt e terra longinqua, et mittunt super urbes Jehudah vocem suam.

The beginning of this verse is variously explained. Some read, ``Remember ye the nations, ``and think that the Prophet says this, because many of the nations were heralds of that vengeance of God, which the Jews despised, as they thought that what the true heralds of God declared were mere fables. They therefore take the meaning of this passage, as though Jeremiah sent the Jews to the nations, intimating that they were unworthy that God should send them his usual teachers. But as the verb is in Hiphil, we ought rather to read, Rehearse it: and some give this explanation, ``Rehearse, ``or tell, ``of the nations;'' that is, ``Announce that the Chaldeans are hastening to lay waste the land, to pull down the cities of Judah and to destroy the people.'' But there is a third meaning which, in my judgment, comports better with the passage. He literally says, Rehearse it to the nations; behold, proclaim against Jerusalem: for as the Prophet saw that he spent his labor in vain on that stupid people, who had become so hardened in their perverseness, that they were wholly inattentive and unteachable, he turned his address to the nations, and said, ``Rehearse it to the Gentiles;'' as though he had said, ``I have long ago reminded this people, that God had other teachers; but what have we gained by our labor, except that the people become continually worse: since then it is so, now he says, `Declare it to the nations concerning Jerusalem;' let the Jews hear nothing more of their ruin, but let God's vengeance on them be made known to the heathens.'' There is nothing strained or obscure in this explanation; and it is wholly consonant with the prophetic style. [112]

He then deigned no longer to favor his own nation with heavenly truth; because this would have cast what was holy to the dogs; but he directs his discourse to the heathens, as though he had said, ``There is more knowledge in the blind and unbe-

[111] The first meaning of the word is iniquity, wickedness; and as the fruit or the effect of wickedness is affliction, distress, misery, it is sometimes taken to express the latter idea. It may be rendered here, distress. — Ed.

[112] The verb in the first sentence followed by {{ז is found in Amos 6:10; where it clearly means ``to make mention of,`` or simply, to mention. So it may be rendered here, ``Make ye mention of the nations,`` or, Mention the nations, that is, for the sake of frightening the Jews. He had before referred to the voice from Dan, etc.; he now commands the invading nations to be proclaimed as approaching. The meaning is not, as Blayney, as well as Calvin, renders the phrase, ``Proclaim ye unto the nations,`` but, ``Proclaim the nations,`` as approaching, according to what is afterwards stated. --- Ed

lieving than in the chosen people of God.'' This does not shew but that he afterwards continued a long time in the discharge of his office; for the prophets, inflamed with zeal for God, often threatened the people with utter ruin, and afterwards performed their charge and tried whether they, of whom they seemed to despair, were healable.

He says that besiegers would come from a far country. Some render {נצרים}, netserim, keepers; and they think that Jeremiah alludes to Nebuchadnezzar, because his captains would come to destroy Jerusalem and to demolish the cities of Judah. But I prefer to render the word ``besiegers.'' Though some think that {נצר}, netser, sometimes means to destroy or lay waste; yet the other meaning seems more suitable, as it appears evident from the next verse. To render it keepers, seems to be frigid; though this is what is done almost by all. I render it ``besiegers,'' --- Come then shall besiegers; for {נצר}, netser, means not only to keep, but also to shut up in a strait place. Come, he says, shall besiegers from a far country. He used these expressions, that the people might not promise themselves impunity, as it has been before stated, through the forbearance of God: for when God deferred his vengeance, they thought themselves relieved from all fear. Hence he says, that though the enemy was not as yet present, though they did not as yet hear the sound of the coming enemy, God at the same time did not threaten them in vain; for he would in an instant send for those from a distant land, who would execute his vengeance.

What follows, they shall send forth their voice against the cities of Judah, is added, in order that the Jews might know that they could by no hindrances prevent God from bringing quickly the Chaldeans to terrify their cities by their sound. What he indeed means is the shout by which soldiers rouse one another to fight: but as this is commonly done as a sign of victory, he intimates that it was all over with the Jews; for the soldiers had as it were already uttered their triumphant shoutings. [113] It follows ---

Jeremiah 4:17

17. As keepers of a field, are they against her round about; because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the Lord.

17. Sicuti custodes (est aliud nomen quam prius {שמרים},) agri erunt super eam in circuitu; quia me exacerbarit, dicit Jehova.

He intimates here that there would be no escape to the Jews when God brought the Chaldeans, for every egress, all the ways, would be closed up, so that they could not migrate to another land. It is the same as though he had said, that such a calamity was nigh them that they could not escape it by exile, it is indeed a sad thing when men flee away naked as from the fire, and seek a place among strangers, and live there in misery and want; but the Prophet declares here, that so grievous was the punishment prepared for the Jews, that it would not indeed be possible for them to save themselves by expatriation and flight, for God would close up every avenue, and would as it were set guards to prevent any to depart.

[113] To make this verse consistent with the context, I render it as follows, — Mention ye the nations, (and say,) "Behold them!" Repeat at Jerusalem, "The watchers are coming from a distant land, And shall raise against the cities of Judah their voice." It is not improbable that {{על here means ``over,'' and that the ``voice'' means a triumphant shout, as Calvin seems to have thought. Then we may give this rendering, --- And shall raise over the cities of Judah their shout. --- Ed.

He afterwards assigns a reason for this, Because they have made me angry [114] The Prophet again shews that God dealt not cruelly with the Jews, nor that they were visited by chance with so many and so grievous calamities, but that they suffered justly, for they had provoked the wrath of God. It would indeed have availed the Jews but little that they dreaded an approaching evil, except they acknowledged that God was punishing them for their perverseness. Hence the reason is stated: it was mentioned, that the Jews might know that these calamities were brought on them by God's hand. And for the same purpose is what follows ---

Jeremiah 4:18

18. Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart.

18. Via tua et actiones tuae fecerunt hoc tibi; haec malitia tua, quoniam amarum, quoniam pertigit ad cor tuum (vel, quamvis amarum sit, et quamvis pertigerit ad cor tuum.)

As I have just said, the Prophet confirms what he had declared, --- that the Jews would not have to suffer, according to what is commonly said, an adverse fortune, but would be summoned by God to judgment, in order that being touched with the fear of God, they might repent, or at least, though destroyed as to the flesh, they might yet, being humbled, obtain pardon and be saved as to the Spirit.

He therefore says, that their deeds had done this for them; as though he had said, ``There is no reason for you to blame God, or your adverse fortune, as ye are wont to do, and as all the heathens also do; for your own deeds have procured for you these calamities. Thus God will perform his office of a judge; and whatever may happen to you is to be ascribed to your own wickedness.'' And to the same purpose is what he adds, This is thy wickedness. In short, the Prophet shews, that the Jews in vain transferred their calamities to this or that cause, for the whole blame was in themselves; they procured for themselves their own ruin by their impiety and evil deeds.

In the second clause of the verse, {נגע} {כי} {מר} {כי}, ki mer, ki nego, etc., the Prophet intimates, that however bitter might be to them what they were to endure, and however it might penetrate into the inmost heart, it was yet to be ascribed to themselves. For hypocrites are wont in their lamentations to cast the blame on God, or at least to complain of fortune. The Prophet anticipates these evasions, by shewing that however bitter might be what the Jews had to endure, and that though God should pierce them through and penetrate to their very bowels and hearts, yet

[114] Calvin has followed the Vulgate and the Syriac. The Septuagint and Arabic have, “thou hast neglected me,“ which is very wide from the original. “Rebel” is the rendering of the Targum, which is the Hebrew, and there is no other reading. Literally it is, For against me hath she rebelled, saith Jehovah. And this is the rendering of Blayney. — Ed.

they themselves were the authors of all their calamities. [115] He then adds ---

Jeremiah 4:19

19. My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.

19. Viscera mea, viscera mea doleo, parietes cordis mei (ad verbum, hoc est, praecordia mea,) cor meum tumultuatur mihi (hoc est, intra me;) non tacebo, quoniam vocem tubae (vel, clangorem tubae) audivit (vel audivisti) anima mea; et clamor belli auditus est (vel, clamourem belli audivit anima mea.)

Some interpreters think that the Prophet is here affected with grief, because he saw that his own nation would soon perish; but I know not whether this is a right view. It is indeed true, that the prophets, though severe when denouncing God's vengeance, did not yet put off the feelings of humanity. Hence they often bewailed the evils which they predicted; and this we shall see more clearly in its proper place. The prophets then had two feelings: when they were the heralds of God's vengeance, they necessarily forgot their own sensibilities; but this courage did not prevent them from feeling sorrow for others; for they could not but sympathize with their brethren, when they saw them, even their own flesh, doomed to ruin. But in this place the Prophet seems not so much to mourn the calamities of the people, but employs figurative terms in order to awaken their stupor, for he saw that they were torpid, and that they neither feared God nor were touched with any shame. Since then there was so much insensibility in the people, it was necessary for Jeremiah and other servants of God to embellish their discourses, so as not simply to teach, but also forcibly and strongly to rouse their dormant minds.

He therefore says, My bowels, my bowels! We shall see that the Prophet in other places thus laments, when he speaks of Babylon, of Edom, and of other enemies of his people, and why? The Prophet was not indeed affected with grief when he heard that the Chaldeans would perish, and when God declared to him the same thing respecting other heathen nations, who had cruelly persecuted the holy people; but since thoughtless men, as I have said, take no notice of what God from heaven threatens them with, it is necessary to use such expressions as may rouse them from their torpor. So I interpret this place: the Prophet does not express his own grief for the calamities of his people, but by the prophetic spirit enlarges on what he had previously said; for he saw that what he had stated had no effect, or was not sufficient to rouse their minds. My bowels! he says. He had indeed grief in his bowels, for he was a member of the community; but we now speak of his object or the purpose he had in view in speaking thus. It is not then the expression of his own

[115] Blayney, contrary to all the early versions, renders {,אלה ``a curse,`` instead of ``these,`` but there is no sufficient reason for the change. It is difficult to see what is the precise idea intended in our version as to the latter part of the verse. The meaning given by Calvin seems to be this, --- that though the visitation was bitter and reached to the heart, it was yet to be ascribed to their wickedness. Blayney's version is this, --- Such is thy calamity; for it is bitterness; for it is a plague even unto thy heart. The latter words are taken as explanatory of the calamity. The word {רעה} does indeed mean sometimes a calamity; but all the early versions, as well as the Targum, render it here ``wickedness.'' Hence the most suitable rendering would be, --- Such is thy wickedness! Though bitter, though reaching to thy heart. That {כי} may be rendered ``though'' is evident from Joshua 17:18; and it ought to be so rendered in Exodus 34:9; and in other places. But we may take the first in{כי} its primary sense, surely, certainly, truly, and the second as a causative, for, because; an instance of a similar kind we meet in Exodus 13:17: the first precedes{כי} an adjective, and is rendered ``Although;'' and the second ,{כי} a verb, and is rendered ``for.'' Then our version would be, --- Such is thy wickedness (that is, its effect)! Surely, bitter; for it reaches to thy heart. --- Ed.

grief, but an affecting description, in order that what he had said might thoroughly rouse the minds of those who heedlessly laughed at the judgment of God.

He then adds, My heart tumultuates, or makes a noise: the verb means to resound, and hence it is metaphorically taken for tumultuating. He speaks of the palpitation of the heart, which takes place when there is great fear. But he calls it noise or tumult, as though he had said, that he was not now master of himself, so as to retain a calm and tranquil mind, for God smote his heart with horrible dread. He afterwards adds, I will not be silent, for the sound of the trumpet has my soul heard, or thou, my soul, hast heard, and the clamor of battle; for the word {מלחמה}chme, is to be thus taken here. He says that he would not be silent because this clamor made a noise in his heart. We hence conclude that he grieved not from a feeling of human sorrow, but he did that which he had been bidden to do by God; for he had been chosen to be the herald of God's vengeance, which was nigh, though not dreaded by the Jews. [116]

Some think that soul is here to be taken for the prophetic spirit, for trumpets had not yet sounded, nor was yet heard the clamor of battle. They therefore suppose that there is to be understood here a contrast, that Jeremiah did not perceive the noise by his ears, but in his heart. But I know not whether this refinement may be fitly applied to the Prophet's words. I therefore think that Jeremiah means, that he spoke in earnest, because he saw God's vengeance as though it were already made evident. And this availed not a little to gain credit to what he had stated, so that the Jews might know that he did not speak of himself, nor act a part as players do on the stage. They were then to know that he did not relate what God had pronounced, but that he was God's herald in such a way, that he heard in his soul or heart, to his great terror, the tumult of war and the sound of the trumpet. It follows ---

Jeremiah 4:20

20. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.

20. Afflictio super afflictionem vocata est; quoniam perdita est omnis terra subito; perdita (vel, destructa, est idem verbum) sunt tabernacula mea, repente cortinae meae.

He pursues the same subject, but amplifies the dread by a new circumstance, --- that God would heap evils on evils, so that the Jews would in vain hope for an immediate relief. By saying, A calamity upon a calamity, he means that the end of one evil would be the beginning of another. For it is what especially distresses miserable men, when they think that their evils will continue long. They indeed imagined that God would be satisfied with an evil that would be soon over, like a storm or a tempest: and when an alleviation appeared, they would have thought

[116] Remarkably concise and striking are the words of this verse, — My bowels! my bowels! I am in pain! O the enclosures of my heart! Turbulent is my heart within me; I will not be silent; for the sound of the trumpet Have I heard; my soul, the shout of battle. To change the person of the verb, “I am in pain,” or in labor, as it literally means, as Blayney does, destroys the force and the vehemence of the passage; and all the early versions retain the first person. “The enclosures,” literally “the walls,” that is, what encloses or surrounds the heart, he mentions first the bowels, then what surrounds the heart, and afterwards the heart itself: and his pain was like that of a woman in travail. Being in this state, he resolved not to be silent but to declare their danger to the people. — Ed.

that they had suffered enough and would have returned again to their old ways and derided God as though they had escaped from his hands. For this reason the Prophet declares, that their calamities would for a long time continue, so that no end to them could be hoped for, until the Jews were wholly destroyed. By saying that calamities were called, or summoned, he briefly reminds them, that God would sit on his tribunal, and that after inflicting light punishment on men for their sins, he would add heavier punishment, and that when he found their wickedness incurable, he would proceed to extremities, so as wholly to destroy those who could not be reclaimed. Called then has been distress upon distress: and how was this? Perished has the whole land; and then, my tabernacles have been suddenly destroyed, in an instant destroyed has been my curtains. [117]

It is thought that the Prophet here compares strongly fortified cities to tents and curtains, in order to expose the foolish confidence with which the Jews were proudly filled, thinking that their cities were a sufficient protection from enemies. It is then supposed that the Prophet here deprives them of their vain confidence by calling these cities tents. There are also those who think that he alludes to his own city Anathoth, or to his own manner of life. It is indeed true that Jeremiah speaks often in other places as a shepherd; that is, he uses common and free modes of speaking. It would not then be unnatural to suppose, that he put on the character of a shepherd when he spoke of tents. Both these views may however be combined, --- that he used a language common among shepherds, --- and that he shews that it was a mere mockery for the Jews to think that they could easily escape, as they had on their borders many fortified cities capable of resisting the attacks of their enemies. But no less suitable view would be this, --- That no corner would be safe; for their enemies would penetrate into the most retired places and destroy the smallest cottages, which might be resorted to as hiding --- places.

He says suddenly, and in an instant, in order that the Jews might not promise themselves any time for negotiating, and thus procrastinate, and think that they would have time enough to make their peace with God. It follows ---

Jeremiah 4:21

21. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet?

21. Usquequo videbo vexillum? audiam vocem (vel, clangorem) tubae?

He concludes that part of his discourse, which, as we have said, he embellished with figurative terms, in order more fully to rouse slow and torpid minds: but he confirms what he said at the beginning of the last verse

(Jeremiah 4:20)

``Distress has been summoned upon distress.''

He indeed repeats in other words the same thing, How long shall I see the standard, he says, and hear the sound of the trumpet? that is, ``You are greatly deceived, if ye think that your enemies, after having for a short time marched through the land,

[117] The literal reading may be thus, — Breach upon breach has happened; For laid waste has been the whole land; Suddenly laid waste have been my tents, In a moment my curtains. He relates what he had seen in a vision, and therefore represents the whole as past. The verb {קרא} in Niphal as here, as well as in Kal, means sometimes to happen, to befall, to take place. The Syriac and the Targum give it here this meaning; and Blayney has adopted the same. --- Ed

will return home: for the evil of war will for a long time afflict you, and God will protract your calamities, so that the sound of trumpets will continue, and the standard will often, and even every day, be exhibited.''

We now then perceive the Prophet's meaning: He first shews, that though their enemies were afar off, they would yet come suddenly, and that the horses of God would be, according to what he said yesterday, swifter than eagles. He afterwards refers to the continued progress of the war; for it was necessary to shew to the Jews, that as they had long heedlessly despised God, so his vengeance would not be momentary, but would lie on them, so as to be without end.

Now we ought to know that at this day there is no less dullness than among the Jews. It is therefore not enough to summon the ungodly and the wicked before God's tribunal, but such metaphorical language ought to be employed as may strike terror, and constrain them to fear, though they may endeavor in every way to harden their own consciences and stupefy themselves, so as to be capable of easily despising God. It is then necessary, that at the present day the servants of God should also speak more strongly and vehemently, that they may rouse hypocrites and the obstinate from their torpor. It then follows ---

Jeremiah 4:22

22. For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.

22. Quoniam stultus populus meus, me non cognovit; filii insipientes ipsi, et non intelligentes ipsi (sunt; {המה} demonstrativum pronomen ponitur vice verbi:) astuti ipsi (vel, sapientes) ad malum; sed ad benefaciendum non intelligunt.

The Prophet again teaches us, that the cause of these evils arose from the people themselves, and was to be found in them, so that they could not transfer it to anybody else. Hence he says, My people are foolish. He speaks here in the person of God; for it immediately follows, Me have they not known: this could not have been said by Jeremiah. God then complains here of the folly of his people; whom he so calls, not by way of honor, but that he might double their reproach; for nothing could have been more disgraceful than that the people, whom God had chosen as his peculiar inheritance, should be thus demented: for why had God chosen the seed of Abraham as his adopted children, but that they might be as lamps, carrying through the world the light of salvation?

``What people in the world, ``says Moses, ``are so noble, who have gods so near them?'' He says also, ``This is thy knowledge and wisdom.'' (Deuteronomy 4:6, 7.)

God then shews here that it was a monstrous thing, which all should regard with abhorrence, that his people should be foolish; as though he had said, ``Can it be that a people whom I have chosen for myself, and with whom I have deposited the covenant of eternal salvation, whom I have instructed by my word --- that this people should so madly ruin themselves?''

The people, then, are foolish, because they have not known me. He here expresses what was the cause of the foolishness or blindness of the people, even because they did not know God; for the knowledge of him is true wisdom. Now God

thus shews that the madness of the people was inexcusable. How so? because he had made himself so familiarly known to them, that the Israelites had no occasion to ask, as Moses says, Who shall ascend into heaven, or who shall descend into the deep? for the word was set before them. (Deuteronomy 30:12-14.) As, then, God had so kindly manifested himself to the Jews, he justly complains that he was not known by them.

There are then here two things to be noticed; first, the kind of madness that is here mentioned, --- the people did not know God. And we hence learn that then only are we wise when we fear God, and that we are always mad and senseless when we regard him not. This is one thing. Secondly, we must know that no excuse of ignorance or mistake was allowed to that people, for God had made himself known to them. And this may be applied to us: God will justly upbraid us at the last day, that we have been foolish and mad, if we are without the knowledge of him; for we have the means, as I have said, of knowing him; and there is no excuse that we can plead for our ignorance, since God has not spoken to us in an obscure manner. God in these words accused the Jews of ingratitude, and of deliberate wickedness, because they knew him not. But since God has at this day made himself more fully known to us, it is, as I have said, a heavier condemnation to us, and our punishment will thus be doubled, if we know not God, who is so kind to us, and deals with us so graciously.

Then he adds, that they were foolish children, and not intelligent. The antithesis in Hebrew is more emphatical than in Greek and Latin; for to say, ``He is foolish, and not wise, ``would be in Greek and Latin frigid, as the last clause would be weaker than the former. But in Hebrew it is different; for in this way is conveyed the idea, that they were so foolish that not even the least portion of a sound mind remained in them. Even those who are foolish and senseless do yet retain some knowledge, however small it may be: hence they say, that the foolish often speak what is suitable. But the Prophet means another thing, --- that the Jews were not only senseless and stupid, but that they were so destitute of all knowledge, that they were like stones or brute animals, and that they had not a particle of sound mind or of rational knowledge remaining in them. [118] The rest we shall defer to another time.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast not only once kindled among us the light of celestial truth, but also invitest us daily to partake of the salvation which has been set before us, --- O grant, that we may not close our eyes, nor render deaf our ears, nor harden ourselves in our sins, but that as thou ceasest not continually to call us to thyself, so we may earnestly strive to hasten to thee, and to persevere in the course of our holy calling, so that we may draw nearer daily to its end, until thou receivest us at length into that celestial kingdom, which has been obtained for us by

[118] The specific meaning of the terms used in this verse is not given in our version, nor by Calvin, nor by Blayney. The following, as I apprehend, is a literal version, — For stupid are my people, Me they do not know; Foolish children are they, And undiscerning are they; Wise are they to do evil, But how to do good they know not. "Stupid," {,{אויל is one grossly ignorant, so as to be without knowledge, and not capable of knowing how to do good, or what is the good to be done. The last line explains the two first. Then ``foolish,'' ,{סכלים} are the perverse, or the perverted, who are foolish through a perverted mind, who are said in the next line to be undiscerning, and who, as in the line which follows, had wisdom enough to do evil. They were stupidly ignorant, and perversely foolish. They were ignorant as to good, and wise as to evil; but this their wisdom was folly. --- Ed

the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Seventeenth

Jeremiah 4:23-26

23. I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light.

23. Vidi terram, et ecce vasta et deformis, et coelos, et nulla lux eorum:

24. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly.

24. Vidi montes, et ecce contremiscentes (contremiscebant), et omnes colles movebantur:

25. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled.

25. Vidi, et ecce nullus homo, et omnes aves coelorum evolaverant:

26. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger.

26. Vidi, et ecce regio foecunda (vel, carmelus) desertum, et omnes urbes ejus destructae a facie Jehovae, et a facie excandescentiae irae ejus.

The Prophet in this passage enlarges in a language highly metaphorical on the terror of God's vengeance, that he might rouse the Jews, who were stupid and careless: nor is the repetition in vain, when he says four times, that he looked. He might have spoken of the earth, heaven, men, and fertile places in one sentence: but it is the same as though he had turned his eyes to four different quarters, and said, that wherever he looked, there appeared to him dreadful tokens of God's wrath, and which threatened the Jews with utter ruin. Nor is it a wonder that the Prophet is so vehement; for we know that men would have heedlessly received all threatenings, except they were violently roused. And this mode of teaching ought to be well known to us; for all in any degree acquainted with the writings of the prophets, must know that they especially pursued this course, in order to rouse hypocrites, and the despisers of God, who, with a stiff neck and a hardened heart, were not moved by any apprehension of punishment. But this passage is remarkable above most others: we ought therefore to consider the import of the Prophet's words.

He says first, that he looked on the earth, and that it was {תהו}, teu, and {בהו}, beu. He employs the very words which Moses adopted in his history of the creation; for before any order was introduced, he says that the earth was {תהו}, teu, and {בהו}, beu, that is, waste and unformed chaos; and it had no beauty pleasing to the eye. [119] It is the same as though He had said, that the order, which had been so

[119] These two words are viewed as synonymous by some, and the versions render them often by the same terms. As to the first, {תהו,} there can be no doubt as to its meaning, for it occurs about twenty times, and in all these places the idea of emptiness is chiefly conveyed: hence it is most commonly rendered in our version, vain, vanity, in vain, nought, etc., 1 Samuel 12:21; Isaiah 40:17; Isaiah 45:18; Isaiah 49:4. It is improperly rendered ``without form,`` in Genesis 1:2, and ``confusion'' in Isaiah 34:11. When applied to the earth, as in Genesis 1:2, it imports emptiness, as it was then unfurnished either with productions or with any inhabitants. This appears evident from Isaiah 45:18, ``He created it not in vain,`` rather, ``not empty did he create it --- {תהו}-{לא} '';{בראה} ``he formed it to be inhabited,`` or more literally, ``for a habitation he formed it.'' As to the other word, ,{בוו} it only occurs three times, Genesis 1:2; Isaiah 34:11; and here. As the former evidently means emptiness, this may be taken to mean confusion or chaos, according to Symmachus, ``{συγκεχυμένη}, --- confused.'' Then the right rendering here would be, --- 23. I looked on the land, And behold emptiness and confusion; And towards the heavens, And they were without their light. It is not the earth, but the land of Judea is what is meant. The whole passage being so striking, shall be here given, --- 24. I looked at the mountains, And, behold, they were shaking, And all the hills made quick motions: 25. I looked, and, behold, there was no man; And every bird of heaven had fled away: 26. I looked, and, behold, Carmel a desert; And all its cities had been demolished By the presence of Jehovah, By the indignation of his wrath. The

beautifully arranged, had now disappeared through God's wrath, and that there was nothing but confusion everywhere. Thus he amplifies the atrocity of their sins; as though he had said, that men had become so fallen, that they had changed the whole form of the world, and blended heaven and earth together, so that now there was no distinction between things. As to the heavens, he says, that there was no light in them: he intimates that the light of the sun, moon, and stars, was in a manner extinguished, because men were unworthy to enjoy such a kindness from God; and as though the sun and moon were ashamed to be witnesses of so many sins and vices.

We now then apprehend what Jeremiah chiefly means in the first verse: He says, that he looked on the earth, and that nothing appeared in it but dreadful chaos and waste, there being no form nor beauty; for the Jews had by their sins subverted the order of nature and the creation of God. And he says, that he looked on the heavens, and that they had no light; for the Jews had deserved to be deprived of that benefit which God had designed the sun and the moon to convey: and it is indeed a singular instance of God's kindness, that he has made such noble objects to be of such service to us. The Prophet, in short, means that such awful tokens of God's wrath appeared in heaven and on earth, as though the whole world had been thrown into confusion. This mode of speaking often occurs in the other prophets, especially in Joel 2:2. Though the words are hyperbolical, yet they do not exceed what is suitable, if we take to the account the extreme insensibility of men: for except God arms heaven and earth, and shews himself ready to take away all the blessings with which he favors mankind, they will, as we have lately said, laugh to scorn all his threatenings.

Jeremiah descends afterwards from heaven to mountains, and says that they trembled, and that all the hills moved or shook; some say, destroyed, but I know not for what reason, for the Prophet no doubt confirms the same thing by another phrase: and as he had said, that mountains trembled, so he also adds, that hills shook; and this is the proper meaning of the verb. Now the reason why he speaks of mountains and hills is evident; for a greater stability seems to belong to them than to level grounds, inasmuch as mountains are for the most part stony, and have their roots most firmly fixed in rocks. Were indeed the whole world to be thrown into confusion, the mountains seem to be so firmly based that no commotion could affect them: but the Prophet says, that they trembled, and that the hills shook

What he saw the third time was solitude; for he says that there were no men, and that all birds had fled away. The principal ornament of the world, we know, consists of men and of living creatures. For why was the earth made so productive, that it brings forth fruits, so many and so various, except for the sake of men and of animals? Though, then, the earth appears very beautiful on account of its trees, herbs, and every kind of fruit, yet its principal ornaments are men and animals. By stating a part for the whole, the Prophet, by mentioning birds, includes all earthly animals: he says then, that the earth was emptied of its inhabitants.

What he saw the fourth time was this --- that the fertile land was turned into a desert. I indeed think that Carmel is to be taken here as meaning the place. That part

whole is represented as already done. The Prophet speaks of what he had seen in the vision. --- Ed.

of the holy land, we know, received its name from its fertility: Carmel means any rich and fruitful spot of ground. But, as I have just said, the mount was so called because it abounded in all kinds of produce; for there were on it fruitful pastures and fertile fields, and every part of it was remarkably pleasant and delightful. I am therefore inclined to consider Carmel itself to be meant here; and my reason is, because he immediately adds, that its cities were destroyed; and this can be more fitly applied to Carmel than generally to all fruitful regions. As to myself, I think that the Prophet speaks of Carmel; and yet he alludes to what the word means. [120] Even in this verse he mentions a part for the whole, as though he had said, that Carmel, which excelled in fertility, had become like a desert. When Isaiah speaks of the renovation of the Church, he says,

``The desert shall be as Carmel,`` (Isaiah 32:15)

as though he had said, that the blessing of God would be so abundant through the whole world, that deserts would bear fruit like Carmel, or those regions which are remarkable for their fertility. But Jeremiah, speaking here of a curse, says, that Carmel would be like the desert; and that all its cities would be demolished, even at the presence of Jehovah, and by the great heat of his wrath

Some render {חרון}, charun, fury: and this kind of language is not without its use; for men, as we have said, except God terrifies them as it were by thunders, will sleep and will not perceive his judgment, so that all threatenings become useless to them. This is the reason why Scripture speaks so often of the fury or of the great heat of God's wrath. Either of the two words might indeed be sufficient; either {חרון}, charun, which means fury or great heat; or {אף} aph, which signifies anger or wrath. Why then are both mentioned? because it is necessary, as I have said, to tear in pieces our hardness as with hammers; for otherwise God could never turn us to fear him. This repetition then ought to avail for the purpose of subduing the perverseness of our nature; not that these turbulent feelings belong to God, as it is well known; but as we cannot otherwise conceive how dreadful his vengeance is, it is necessary that he should be set before us as one who is angry and burning with wrath: in a like manner, eternal death is described to us under the metaphor of fire.

Now, as to the sum of what is here said, the Jews at that time no doubt enjoyed great abundance and indulged their pleasures; in short, they were fully pleased with their condition. But the Prophet here declares that he saw at a distance what these blind Jews did not see, even God's vengeance approaching, which would deprive them of that abundance, on account of which they were so swollen with pride, and which would reduce them all into such a state of desolation that nothing would remain above or below, but a disordered confusion, such as existed before nature was brought to order, when the earth was not separated from the heavens, and there was only a confused mass, including all the elements, and without any light. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 4:27

27. For thus hath the Lord said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not

[120] All the early versions, as well as the Targum, retain the word "Carmel." Blayney renders it "the fruitful field." — Ed.

make a full end.

27. Quia sic dicit Jehova, Desolata erit (vasta, perdita erit) tota terra; et finem (vel, consumptionem) non faciam (atque tunc copula resolvetur in adversativam, non tamen consumptionem faciam.)

The Prophet briefly explains here what he understood by the four things which he had seen and of which he had spoken. He then declares, as it were in the person of God, that there would be a dreadful desolation throughout Judea; Wasted, he says, shall be the whole land, or, in the whole land there shall be desolation. Some explain what afterwards follows, as though he mitigated the severity of his language. Hence, as they think, a mitigation is added, which was to relieve the faithful with some hope of mercy, lest they should wholly despond. And indeed were he to threaten only he might fill a hundred worlds with terror. Lest then despair should so overwhelm the faithful as to restrain them from fleeing to God for mercy, it is often added by way of mitigation, that God would not consume the whole land.

The word {כלה}, cale, sometimes means perfection, but in most places, consummation; for the verb signifies to perfect and to consume, and for the same reason. Though these two things seem inconsistent, yet what is consumed is said to be perfected, for it comes to an end. If this explanation is approved, we now see the reason why he declares that he would not make a consummation, with whatever severity he might punish the sins of his people; it was, that some hope might remain for the faithful, so that they might not be wholly discouraged; which would have been the case had not God promised to be propitious and mindful of his covenant.

Some perhaps may approve of reading the sentence as a question, and think that the object is to beat down the pride of the ungodly, and to dissipate the boasting of those who relied on the hope of impunity; as though he had said, ``Do ye still deny that I shall make a consummation?''

Now, though the former exposition contains a richer truth, yet I prefer to take {כלה}, cale, as signifying an end, as though he had declared that he would observe no moderation in executing his vengeance: [121] and a similar language occurs in the next chapter. The real meaning then is, --- that God would to the end carry on his work of desolation. The prophets indeed do not always speak alike when they announce God's judgments. Sometimes they denounce ruin where none seems to be safe; yet God ever preserves some hidden seed, as it is said in Isaiah 1:9; where also it appears evident what the prophets understood by making a consummation. For God there threatens and says,

``Behold I will make a consummation;'' yet he afterwards adds, ``The consummation shall bring forth fruit,''

that is, what remained of the consummation. The prophets elsewhere compare the Church of God to olive --- trees when shaken, or to vines after vintage, (Isaiah

[121] All the early versions and the Targum favor the former view, as they all render the sentence, "Yet a consummation I will not make." Gataker mentions another explanation, "I will not yet make a full end" with you; that is, I will punish you yet farther: and reference is made to Jeremiah 5:18. This view is adopted by Blayney and Scott. But the former view is no doubt the right one; for this is the meaning of the phrase as found in other places; see Jeremiah 30:11; where it is clear that {{כלה {עשה} is wholly to destroy. See also Nehemiah 9:31; Ezekiel 11:13; Ezekiel 20:17; Nahum 1:9. The meaning then is, ``Yet I will not make an entire destruction.'' Henry takes this view, and Lowth seems to prefer it. Indeed the phrase has no other meaning wherever it is used. --- Ed

17:6; Isaiah 24:13;) for some grapes ever remain which escape the eyes of the gatherers; so also, when the olive --- trees are shaken, some fruit remain on the highest branches. Thus God says, that the consummation he makes in his Church is like the vintage or the shaking of olive --- trees, when some fruit remain and escape the eyes of the gatherers. We now perceive what the Prophet means, --- that there would be the ruin of the whole people, so that they would have neither a name nor existence as a body; which thing also happened, when they were driven as exiles into Babylon; for the people, as a civil community, then ceased to exist, so that there was an end made of them.

I indeed allow that God's threatenings cannot avail for our salvation, unless connected with the promise of pardon, so that being raised up by the hope of salvation we may flee to him: for as long as we deem God inexorable, we shun every access to him; and thus despair drives us into a rage like that of fiends. Hence it is that the reprobate rage so much against God, and make a great clamor: and they would willingly thrust him from his throne. It is therefore necessary that a hope of salvation should be set before us, so that we may be touched with repentance: and as this promise is perpetual, whatever may happen, even if earth and heaven were mixed together, and ruin on every side were filling us with dread, we must still remember that there will be ever some remnant according to the passages we have referred to in the first and tenth chapters of Isaiah. But as the people were not prepared to receive consolation, the design of the Prophet here is different, for he only mentions punishment. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 4:28

28. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.

28. Super hoc lugebit terra, et nigrescent (vel, caligine aut nigredine obducti erunt) coeli desursum (nescio tamen an posset verti, a transgressione; nam {מעל} significat etiam transgredi et inquietare;) quia 1oquutus sum; cogitavi et non poenituit, et non convertar ab hoc.

Jeremiah proceeds here with the same subject, and still introduces God as the speaker, that what is said might produce a greater effect. For this, he says, the land shall mourn. The mourning of the land is to be taken for its desolation; but he refers to what he had said before. He does not speak of the inhabitants of the land; for they who thus explain the passage, diminish much the force of the expression; for the Prophet here ascribes terror and sorrow to the very elements, which is much more striking than if he said, that all men would be in sorrow and grief. The same also must be thought of the heavens. Indeed, the latter clause proves that he does not speak of the inhabitants, but of the land itself, which, though without reason, seems yet to dread God's vengeance. And thus the Prophet upbraids men with their insensibility; for when God appeared as judge from heaven, they were not touched with any fear. Mourn then shall the land, and covered shall be the heaven with darkness; that is, though men remain stupid, yet both heaven and earth shall feel how dreadful God's judgment will be.

He afterwards adds, Because I have spoken. Some consider {אשר}, asher, what, to be understood between this sentence and the following verb: ``Because I have spoken what I have purposed, and I have not repented.'' But the concise phrase is not unsuitable: God first intimates, that he had pronounced the sentence, which would remain firm and unchangeable; as though he had said, ``I have once for all declared by my servants what I will do.'' For the prophets, we know, were the heralds of God's vengeance: and as their doctrine was often despised, so at this day also the world obstinately rejects it; and as it often now derides all threatenings, so it happened then. But Jeremiah introduces here God as the speaker, as though he had said, ``My servants have been despised by you; but they have said nothing but what I have commanded them: I am therefore the author of that sentence by which you ought to have been moved and roused.'' In this sense it is that God testifies that he had spoken; for he transfers to himself what the Jews thought proceeded from the prophets, and hence supposed that they were at liberty to regard as nothing what the prophets pronounced against them: ``I myself am He,'' says God, ``who has spoken.'' So that we must understand a contrast here between God and the prophets; as though he had said, that the Jews in vain slumbered in their sins, because they thought they had to do only with mortals, since God himself had commanded his servants to denounce the ruin that was despised.

But that they might not think that God had thus spoken to cause a false alarm, (for hypocrites flatter themselves with this pretense, that God does not speak seriously, but that he frightens them with bugbears, as children are wont to be,) he says, that he had purposed. He had said before that he had spoken, that is, by his prophets; but what he means now by this word is, that the predictions which he had made known as to their destruction proceeded from his own secret counsel: ``This,'' he says, ``has been decreed by me.''

He then adds, It has not repented me, and I will not turn from it. He briefly shews, that the Jews were now given up to death, that they might not think that God could be pacified as long as they followed their vices; for God had decreed to destroy them; and he had not only declared this by his prophets, but had also resolved within himself to do so. By the term repent, is to be understood a change; for God cannot, strictly speaking, repent, as nothing is hid from him; but he speaks, as I have lately stated, after a human manner: and every ambiguity is removed by the next phrase, when he says, I will not turn from it, that is, ``I will not retract my sentence.'' [122] It follows ---

Jeremiah 4:29

29. The whole city shall flee for the noise of the horsemen and bowmen; they shall go into thickets, and climb up upon the rocks: every city shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell therein.

[122] The latter part is very concise, — Because I have said, I have purposed, And have not repented, And I will not turn from it. The turning refers to what he had said, and repentance to the purpose. Blayney followed the Septuagint, and changed the order of the words, and thus destroyed the right connection of the passage, and the common parallelism of the language. We may also notice this passage as an instance of what is often found both in the Old Testament, and also in the New, — that when two or more things are consecutively stated, the most obvious, the most apparent, is mentioned first, and then the most hidden, or what is in order previous. Purpose is first in order, but speaking is first mentioned. — Ed.

29. A voce equitis et jaculantis arcu fugiet omnis civitas; penetrabunt (vel, ingredientur) in densitates (alii, in nubes; {מיבע} significat densitates, ut sunt loca arboribus perplexa, significat etiam nubes; potius hic existimo accipi pro nubibus, quia sequitur,) ascendent in rupes (postea:) omnis civitas relicta erit, et nullus vir habitabit in illis.

By saying, that at the voice or sound of horsemen and bowmen, there would be an universal flight, he means, that the enemies would come with such impetuosity, that the Jews would not dare to wait for their presence, but would flee here and there before they were attacked: for the word voice or sound, no doubt, is set here in opposition to wounds. They did swell, we know, with amazing pride; hence the Prophet ridicules that false confidence by which they were so inebriated as not to dread God's judgment: ``The sound alone of enemies,'' he says, ``will frighten you; so that all the cities, being left by their inhabitants, will easily fall into their hands, for walls will not defend themselves; nay, the gates will be open.'' Flee then will every city; that is, all the cities will have recourse to flight. Then it follows, Ascend will they into the clouds, or into thicknesses: this may be applied to the enemies, to shew that they would be so nimble and active as to fly, as it were, to the clouds, and climb the highest rocks. But I prefer to connect this sentence with the former, as intimating, that to ascend the clouds would not be too arduous for the Jews in their anxious flight. Inasmuch as the tops of mountains were often covered with thick trees, in order to form a dark shade, this passage may mean, that they fled to such places. However this may have been, the Prophet here, no doubt, refers to such high situations. Hence, the meaning would be more evident if we retain the word, clouds. As to what is intended, we see that that is clear; which is, that the enemies of the Jews would in swiftness be equal to the eagles while pursuing them; or, what is more commonly thought, that the terror felt by the Jews would be so great, that in their flight they would not seek recesses nigh at hand, but would flee to the highest tops of mountains, and hide themselves there among the trees, as though they had climbed into the clouds. They would ascend into craggy rocks, as they could not think themselves otherwise safe from the attacks of their enemies. [123]

He then adds, that every city would be forsaken, so that no one would dwell in them. We see that the Prophet had ever this in view --- to rouse the Jews, who had deaf ears and stony hearts, so that they felt no concern for their own calamities, and even boldly despised God, as though they had made a covenant with death, according to what is said in another place. (Isaiah 28:15.) He afterwards subjoins ---

Jeremiah 4:30

30. And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; thy lovers will despise

[123] The verbs in this are all in the past tense, as in some former instances. The Prophet had already seen in a vision what he here states, — At the voice (or sound) of the rider and of the handler of the bow, Flee did every city; They went into thickets, and into cliffs they climbed; Every city was forsaken, And dwell in them did no man. The word for “thickets” means sometimes “clouds.” The verb signifies to be dense, thick, gross, bulky: but the plural noun means a thick wood, as well as a thick or dense mass of vapors, which form clouds. It is rendered “{ἄλσῃ}, --- forests,`` by the Septuagint and Syriac; and ``sylvas --- woods,'' by the Targum. --- Ed

thee, they will seek thy life.

30. Et tu perdita (aut, vastata) quid facies? Quamvis to induas coccino, quamvis to ornes ornamentis auri (vel, monilibus aureis, ut alii vertunt,) quamvis distinguas fuco (aut, stybio, ut alii vertunt,) oculos tuos, frustra to decorabis (ad verbum, pulchrificabis;) abominabuntur to amatores tui, animam tuam quaerent.

The Prophet boldly ridicules the Jews, in order to cast down their pride and haughtiness. It was indeed his object to check that pride with which they were elated against God. The Prophet could not have done this without assuming a higher strain than usual, and by rendering his discourse more striking by using metaphorical words. It is indeed the language of derision; he exclaims, What wilt thou do, thou wretched one? The Jews had hitherto been inflated with contempt towards God, and their high spirits had not been subdued. Since, then, their haughtiness continued untamed, the Prophet cries out and says, ``Thou wretched, what wilt thou do?'' as though he had said, ``In vain do they flatter themselves and promise themselves aid from this and from that quarter, for their condition is past any remedy.'' [124]

He afterwards adds, Though, etc.; for so I consider the connection of the verse; and they seem right to me who do not separate the words of the Prophet. But the view which others take appears frigid, ``Who now adornest thyself, who now clothest thyself in scarlet, who adornest thyself with ornaments of gold, who paintest thy eyes black.'' To no purpose do they introduce the relative, for it renders the meaning of the Prophet different from what it really is.

These parts follow one another, and the principal verb is found in these words, In vain dost thou adorn thyself; and the particle {כי} is to be rendered ``though.''

There are those who consider ceremonies to be intended, as hypocrites think that they are by these protected against God's judgment: but this view is unsuitable and wholly alien to what is here set forth. It is indeed true, that ceremonies are to hypocrites dens of thieves, as we shall hereafter see, (Jeremiah 7:11;) but the Prophet in this place refers to meretricious ornaments; for the people, as it had before appeared, were become like an adulterous woman. God had formed with them as it were a marriage --- contract; they had violated it; and this perfidy was like the defection of an adulteress, who leaves her husband and wanders here and there, and lives as a prostitute. As then harlots, for the purpose of enticement, are wont to dress themselves elegantly, to paint their faces, and to use other allurements, the Prophet says, ``In vain wilt thou adorn thyself; though thou puttest on scarlet, though thou shinest with gold even from the head to the feet, yet all this will be superfluous and useless; and though, in addition to all this, thou paintest thy face, [125] it will yet avail thee nothing.''

[124] The words "thou wretched," or, more commonly, "thou spoiled," are left out in the Septuagint and Arabic, and are retained in this sense by the Vulgate, Syriac, and the Targum. But, as Blayney justly says, it is a rendering that is not correct. "Thou," as in the received text, is feminine, and "spoiled" is masculine. The Keri and many MSS. have {{את instead of ;{אתי} and ,{שדוד} as Blayney supposes, is not a passive participle, but a verb in the infinitive mood, used as a noun. So he gives this version, --- And against spoiling what wilt thou do? The word ``spoiled,'' or wasted, may indeed refer to ``every city,'' mentioned in the former verse, and the word for city is masculine. We may then render thus, --- And the city being wasted, what wilt thou do? ``The city'' may be deemed as the poetical singular for the plural. --- Ed.

[125] The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Targum give this rendering, — "Though thou paintest with stibium thine eyes." The Hebrew literally is, as it is rendered by Blayney, — Though thou

Now, we know whom he understands by lovers, even the Egyptians and the Assyrians. For the Jews, when oppressed by the Egyptians, were wont to seek help from the Assyrians; and again, when attacked by the Assyrians, they became suppliants to the Egyptians. The prophets compared this sort of conduct to that of strumpets; for whenever they courted the aid of either of these parties, they broke the bond of marriage, by which they were connected with God, and perfidiously violated their pledged faith. Hence, the Prophet says, ``Even if the Egyptians promise wonderful things to thee, as a lover allured by thy beauty and by thy meretricious ornaments, yet they will deceive thee; and if the Assyrians shew themselves ready to bring aid, they also will disappoint thy hope: so that thou shalt be like a destitute strumpet, reduced to extreme want.'' I cannot finish today: I must therefore defer the rest until to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that though we are torpid in our vices, we may yet be attentive to these examples of thy wrath, by which thou designest to warn us, so that we may learn by the misery of others to fear thee: and may we be also attentive to those threatenings, by which thou drawest us to thee, as thou failest to allure us by thy kindness: and may we, in the meantime, feel assured that thou wilt ever be propitious and merciful to all miserable sinners, who will from the heart seek thee and sincerely and unfeignedly repent; so that we may contend with our vices, and with real effort strive to deliver ourselves from those snares of Satan which he ever spreads for us, in order that we may more freely devote ourselves altogether to thee, and take such delight in thy righteousness, that our object and aim through the whole course of our life may be to please thee, and to render our services approved in Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Eighteenth

WE stated, yesterday, what the Prophet meant by the scarlet clothing, by the golden ornaments, and by the painting, which he mentions, even those delusive crafts, which the princes and the people employed in forming confederacies; for they ever acted perfidiously. But it was also said, that the Prophet refers to the spiritual marriage which God had formed with the people of Israel; for a kind of adultery was committed, when they sought foreign alliances; as they thus denied God, being not satisfied with his protection. As a wife considers herself sufficiently protected by her husband, so the Israelites ought to have depended on God only: but inasmuch as they ran here and there, following their own vagrant desires, the Prophet justly compares them to adulterous women.

But he says, that they would be an abomination to their lovers; and not only so, but that both the Egyptians and the Assyrians, in whom they foolishly trusted, would be their worst enemies: Hate thee, he says, shall thy lovers; [126] yea, they will seek thy life; that is, those aids, by which thou thinkest to become safe and secure, will

distendest with paint thy eyes. The verb {,{קרע means first to rend, to divide, and then to divide in the sense of distending or enlarging. Large eyes were considered a beauty, and women used a sort of paint, or rather powder, for the purpose of enlarging them. See Lowth's note on Isaiah 3:16, and Parkhurst under the word .{פך} --- Ed

[126] Rather, — Rejected thee have paramours. This is the meaning of the verb when followed as here by {.{ב See note on Jeremiah 2:37. The word for paramours means not lovers, but lewd or mad lovers. The verb is rendered ``to dote upon,'' Ezekiel 23:12. --- Ed.

be for thy destruction. It then follows ---

Jeremiah 4:31

31. For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, and the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, that bewaileth herself, that spreadeth her hands, saying, Woe is me now! for my soul is wearied because of murderers.

31. Certa vocem parturientis audivi, afflictionem (vel, anxietatem) quasi puerperae (vel, parientis primogenitum; nam proprie hoc significat nomen) vocem filiae Sion; lugebit (vel, conqueretur, vel, ingemiscet,) scindet (vel, extender, ut alii vertunt, vel, confliget) manus suas: Vae nunc mihi, quia defecit anima mea propter interfectos (alii active, propter interfectores.)

By these words Jeremiah confirms what the latter part of the preceding verse contains: nor was it for the sake of elucidating his subject that he enlarged on it; but when he saw his own nation so hard and almost like stones, he employed many words and set forth in various ways what he might have expressed in one sentence: and what he taught would have been often coldly received, had he not added exhortations and threatenings. It was on this account that he now expresses in other words what he had previously said, I have heard, he says, the voice as of one in labor This hearing, no doubt, is to be taken consistently with the representation which had been made to him; for Jeremiah could not hear in a way different from others; but he speaks according to the discovery made to him of the approaching judgment of God, which was then unheeded by the people; and he had this discovery, that he might by such a representation as this make it known to them. He then says, that he had heard, as though he had witnessed already all that was to come. He then exaggerates the evil; for he puts distress, {צרה}, tsere, instead of ``voice,'' {קול}, kul; and then he mentions, as an instance of greater pain, a woman bringing forth her first --- born, instead of a woman in labor. Then Jeremiah means, that final ruin was nigh that people who could not then be restored from their sinful courses; but he intimates, as also the Spirit speaks in other places, that their destruction would be sudden; while they would be saying, Peace and security, sudden destruction would come upon them. (1 Thessalonians 5:3.) And so the Prophet now declares, that the Jews in vain hardened themselves against God, as though their ruin was not approaching, for their sorrow would come suddenly. As a woman may be cheerful at meat or at her leisure, and may be suddenly seized with the pain of labor, so also the Prophet shews, that the Jews had no reason to think that they could escape God's vengeance by a false confidence, for their destruction would come upon them unexpectedly.

He sets forth at the same time, as already said, the greatness or the extremity of their grief by this similitude, The voice of the daughter of Sion, who complains, etc.; for the relative may be here added. Some take the verb to be in the second person, ``Thou wilt lament and extend, ``or rend, ``thy hands;'' but this is not suitable, because the third person is immediately used, ``thy hands.'' Then what he says is, that the voice of the daughter of Sion would be an evidence of her extreme grief, for she would lament; and he adds, at the same time, the smiting of the hands. This verb

is variously rendered; but as {פרש}, peresh, means properly to rend or to divide, I think the Prophet expresses the posture of a woman in grief; for she usually smites her hands together and as it were divides them by putting the fingers between one another. Some render the word ``expand, ``for the hands are divided when raised up. As to what is meant, there is nothing ambiguous in the Prophet's words; for his object is to shew, that God's vengeance would be so dreadful, that the Jews would lament, not in an ordinary measure, but like women, when in the extreme pain of labor.

He then concludes by saying, Woe to me, for failed has my soul on account of murderers Here the Prophet intimates, that all the rest were blind in the midst of light, yet God's judgment, which the ungodly and wicked laughed at, or at least disregarded, was seen clearly by him. His soul, he says, fainted for the slain; and yet no one had hitherto been slain: but by this mode of speaking, he shews, that he had as it were before his eyes what was hid from others, and hence their hearts were not affected. [127] Now follows ---

[127] This latter part is differently taken by most. It is considered to be the confession of the daughter of Sion. The whole verse is remarkably striking, — For the voice as of one in travail have I heard, The distress as of one giving birth to a first-born, The voice of the daughter of Sion; Who pants for breath, who spreads her hands, — "Wo now to me, For melted has my soul because of murderers." It is a common thing in Hebrew to omit the relative "who," before a verb in a future tense, especially when it means the present time. The scene is described as present. The passage might be expressed in Welsh without the relative. "Who pants for breath," is rendered by Horsley, "that draweth her breath short;" and he adds, "The passage is a most affecting picture of the last struggles of a woman expiring in labor." — Ed.

Chapter 5

CHAPTER 5

Jeremiah 5:1

1. Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.

1. Circuite per vias (alii vertunt, inquirite, vel, explorate, vel, investigate per vias) Jerusalem, et videte, agedum, (hic enim {אנ} est hortantis, proximo versu debuit verti nunc, vae nunc mihi,) et cognoscite, et inquirite, in vicis ejus (in compitis ejus,) an invenietis virum, an erit quifaciat judicium (hoc est, rectitudinem,) qui quaerat veritatem, et parcam illi.

In this verse, as in those which follow, God shews that he was not too rigid or too severe in denouncing utter ruin on his people, because their wickedness was wholly incurable, and no other mode of treating them could be found. We, indeed, know that it is often testified in Scripture, that God is patient and waits until sinners repent. Since then God everywhere extols his kindness, and promises to be merciful even to the worst if they repent, and since he of his own accord anticipates sinners, it may appear strange that he rises with so much severity against his own Church. But we know how refractory the ungodly are; and hence they hesitate not to expostulate with God, and willfully accuse him, as though he treated them with cruelty. It is then for this reason, that God now shews that he was not, as it were, at liberty to forgive the people; ``Even if I would, ``he says, ``I could not.'' He speaks, indeed, after the manner of men; but in this way, as I have said, he shews that he tried all expedients, before he had recourse to extreme severity, but that there was no remedy, on account of the desperate wickedness of the people. And this is what the words fully express.

Go round, [128] he says, through the streets of Jerusalem, and see, I pray, and know; inquire through all the cross-ways Jeremiah might have said in one sentence, ``If one man be found in the city, I am ready to forgive: ``but God here permits the whole world to inquire diligently and carefully what was the state of the holy city, which ever gloried in that title. But he now, as also in the next verse, speaks of Jerusalem. He had spoken also of the neighboring cities; but as the holiness of the whole land seemed then to have its seat and habitation at Jerusalem, God here addresses that city, which as yet retained some appearance of sanctity, and excelled other cities. He then says, Inquire, see, know, look, whether there is a man, etc. He allows here all men to form a judgment, as though he had said, ``Let all be present, since the Jews seek to create an ill-will towards me, and complain of too much rigor, as though I treated them unhumanly; let all who wish come as judges, let them inquire, ask, make a thorough search; and when it shall be found out that there is not in it even one just man, what else can be done, but that the city must be destroyed? for what can be done to the abandoned and irreclaimable, except I execute my judgment on them?''

We now understand the Prophet's object; for he intended here to shut the mouths of the Jews, and to expose their slanders, that they might not clamor against God or blame his judgment, as though it exceeded the limits of moderation: and he shews also, that though God was disposed to pardon, there was yet no place for pardon, and that his mercy was excluded by their untamable obstinacy, since there was not one man in Jerusalem who had any regard for uprightness.

Here, however, a question may be started, Why does Jeremiah say that no good man could be found, since he himself was at Jerusalem, and his friend Baruch, and some others, an account of whom we shall hereafter find? There were then in the city some true servants of God, and some as yet remained who had true religion, though the number was small. It appears then that the language is hyperbolical.

But we must observe, that the Prophet here speaks of the people to the exclusion of the faithful. That this may appear more evident, we must remember a passage in the eighth chapter of Isaiah,

``Seal the law and bind the testimony for my disciples,''
(Isaiah 8:16;)

where it appears that God saw that he sent his Prophet in vain, and that his labors were spent in vain among a people wholly irreclaimable. Hence he says, ``Bind the testimony and seal the law among the disciples.'' We see that God gathered as it were together the few in whom remained any seed of true religion, yea, in whose hearts any religion was found. They were not then numbered with the people. So now Jeremiah did not consider Baruch and a few others as forming a part of that

[128] Our version is, "Run ye to and fro," which has been taken from the Septuagint-{περιδρύμετε}; but this is a more correct rendering. The Vulgate is ``circuite --- go round;'' the Syriac is the same. ``Streets'' were the narrow ones, the lanes; and what Calvin renders ``the cross-ways,`` and our version ``broad places,`` were the wide streets, or the squares. In the former the poor people lived, and in the latter the great people, the chief men of the city. The examination was to extend to all the inhabitants. First, it takes place as to the poor in the lanes, and afterwards among the higher orders in the wide streets. The whole verse might be thus rendered, --- 1. Go ye round through the narrow streets of Jerusalem, And see, I pray, and know; Yea, seek in the broad streets; If ye can find a man, if there be any, Who doeth justice, who seeks faithfulness, Then will I spare it. The {ו} after may{אם} be often rendered ``Then;'' and this passage requires it to be so rendered. ``That I may pardon her'' is Blayney's version; but this hardly corresponds with the former part; ``If,'' and ``that,'' form no connection. --- Ed

reprobate people; and he speaks, as it has been stated, of the community in general; for there were some separated from the rest, not only by the secret counsel of God, but according to the judgment that had been pronounced. He hence truly declares, that there was not one just man.

We ought also to consider with whom he was then contending. On the one side were the king and his counselors, who, inflated with the promises, which they perverted, did not think it possible that the throne of David would fall.

``This is my rest for ever --- As long as the sun and moon shall be, they shall be my witnesses in heaven, that thy seed shall never fail.'' (Psalm 132:14; Psalm 89:37, 38.)

With such words were they armed. But as hypocrites falsely claim God's promises, so these unprincipled men boasted that God was on their side. Jeremiah had also to fight with another party, as we shall hereafter see, that is, with a host of false prophets; for there was a greater number of them, as is ever to be found in the world. The whole priestly order was corrupt, and openly carrying on war with God; and the people were nothing better. Jeremiah then had to contend with the king and his counselors, with the false prophets, with the ungodly priests, and with the wicked people. So he says, that there was not one man among them who engaged himself in appeasing God's wrath.

To seek judgment is the same thing as to labor for uprightness: for the word {משפט}, meshephet means rectitude, or equity, or the rule of acting justly. He says then, that there was no one who practiced what was just; that there was no one who sought the truth Truth, as in a verse that follows, is to be taken for integrity, honesty; as though he had said, that all were given to falsehoods and frauds and crafts. It was therefore impossible that God should have been propitious to the city; for the relative {ה} after {ל}, being of the feminine gender, cannot be otherwise applied than to Jerusalem. God then says, that he would be merciful to it, if there could be found a just man among the king's counselors, or among the priests, or among the prophets: but they had all united together in opposition to everything just and right. It follows ---

Jeremiah 5:2

2. And though they say, The Lord liveth; surely they swear falsely.

2. Etsi, vivit Jehova, dixerint, ob id in vanum (vel, fallaciter) jurabunt.

This is added by way of anticipation; for the Jews, as it is well known, thought that they had a cover for all their vices, inasmuch as they had God's name continually in their mouths. Since then they professed to worship the God of Abraham, they thought that this pretext was sufficient to cover all their wickedness. The Prophet obviates this objection, and shews that this disguise was of no avail, because in thus using God's name, they profaned it: and he goes still further; for he shews that the Jews, not only in common practice, were wholly destitute of the fear of God, but that when anything of a religious kind appeared among them, it was sacrilegious; and this is far worse than when God's name is forgotten, and wretched men allow themselves a full license in sinning, as though they could not conceal their wickedness: for when they openly provoke God, and as it were dishonor him to his face, how detestable

and how monstrous is their impiety! This then is what Jeremiah sets forth, Though they say, Live does Jehovah, yet in this they swear falsely

We now perceive the Prophet's meaning: In the first place, he takes away from hypocrites their vain confidence in thinking that God would be propitious to them, provided they avowed his name, without considering how precious God's name is, but regarding it as nothing to swear carelessly by his name: but the Prophet not only condemns the hypocrisy of the Jews, but, as I have said, he enhances their wickedness; for they hesitated not to profane God's sacred name, and to carry on, as it were, an open war with him, by abusing his name in swearing.

By mentioning, Live does Jehovah, he refers to the words which the godly also use when they make an oath; for when they appeal to the living God, it is the same thing as though they stood before his tribunal; and at the same time said, that they knew that though God may defer his vengeance, yet an account must be given, because he ever lives. Thus the godly acknowledge that there is nothing gained by delay, in case God suspends his vengeance, if they swear falsely. But the Prophet, as I have already said, applies this to hypocrites, who seemed to ascribe great honor to God, for nothing is more specious than their words: gall indeed was in their heart, while honey was on their lips. Hence the Prophet derides this false pretense, and says, ``Even when they swear most solemnly as to the words used, and shew a high concern for religion, nevertheless they swear falsely.'' Some render {לכן}, lacen, surely, or certainly; but the meaning will be plainer, if we render it ``nevertheless.'' [129] It follows ---

Jeremiah 5:3

3. O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.

3. Jehova, oculi tui annon ad veritatem? Percussisti eos, et non doluerunt; consumpsisti eos, et renuerunt suscipere disciplinam (vel, correctionem;) obduraverunt facies suas magis quam petram (vel, lapidem, magis quam saxum;) renuerunt converti (vel, redire.)

Some give a strained exposition of the beginning of the verse, or rather pervert it, as though the Prophet had said, that God would not turn his eyes from what was right, because he would rigidly execute his vengeance on his people. But Jeremiah goes on here with the same subject, for there is no importance to be attached to the division of the verses. They who have divided them have often unknowingly perverted the meaning. The divisions then are not to be heeded, only the number is to be retained as a help to the memory; but as to the context, they often are a hindrance to readers; for it is preposterous to blend things which are separate, and to divide what is connected. This remark has just now occurred to me, and it is

[129] There are many MSS. which have {אכן}, ``surely,'' but may {לכן} also be so rendered; yet, as ``nevertheless'' is its meaning, in Jeremiah 16:14, and other places, it may be so taken here. The Septuagint must have read {לא} ,{כן} and the sentence is a question, ``Do they not thus swear falsely?'' But the early versions favor the present reading; and it gives a suitable meaning, --- And though ``Live does Jehovah, ``they say, Nevertheless falsely do they swear. The verbs are in the future tense, but used to express present acts, as is the case often in Hebrew, and also very commonly in Welsh. The words in the latter language might be expressed exactly as in the former, and be understood as speaking of what is present, --- Ac er ``Byw yw Jehova'' a ddywedant, Etto yn gelwyddog y tyngant. --- Ed.

necessary, as this place calls for it; for the Prophet, after having said that the Jews were perfidious and guilty of duplicity, and destitute of all integrity, immediately adds, But the eyes of God regard fidelity; as though he had said, that they in vain pretended to avow God's name, and made a shew of religion by ceremonies and by an outward display; for God searches the heart, and cares nothing for those external masks by which men's eyes are captivated.

The Prophet very significantly turns his discourse to God, to shew that he was wearied in addressing the people, for he saw that he prevailed nothing with the obstinate; for had there been any teachable spirit in the Jews, he would no doubt have exhorted them to practice integrity. He might have said, ``They are mistaken who swear falsely in God's name, and persuade themselves that he will be their Father; for his eyes regard fidelity and uprightness of heart.'' This would have been a regular way of proceeding, and this mode of teaching would have been most suitable: but Jeremiah abruptly breaks off his address, and leaves his own people; ``O God, ``he says, ``thy eyes look on fidelity;'' as though he had said, ``What more can I have to do with this wretched people? I address words to rocks and stones: therefore I bid you adieu, and shall have no more to do with you; I will now turn to God.'' We now see how much more forcible and striking is this turning from the people to God, than if the Prophet continued his address to the Jews, and sought to instruct them: for he now shews that he was broken down with weariness; for he saw that his labor was useless, and that all whom he had addressed were altogether refractory: nor did he, at the same time, intend to speak these words at random, and to no purpose; nay, his object was more sharply to touch those who were stupid, by letting them know that he left off addressing them, because he had no hope respecting them.

But what I have said elsewhere ought to be borne in mind, --- that the Prophets did not write all that they preached, but collected the substance of what they had delivered to the people; and this collection now forms the prophetic books. There is therefore no doubt but that Jeremiah had spoken at large on repentance, --- that he had exposed the sins of hypocrites, --- that he had denuded the fallacious pretences of the people, --- and that he had severely reproved their obstinacy. But after having done all these things, he found it necessary to desist from pursuing his course, for he saw that no fruit could be hoped from his labors and his preaching. Now, when the Jews knew this, they ought to have been deeply affected; and this ought to be the case with us now, when we see that God's Spirit is provoked by our perverseness; and as this is a dreadful thing, it is what ought more than anything else to touch our hearts. Consider what it is: God daily invites us most kindly to himself; but when he sees that our hearts and heads are so extremely hard, he leaves us, because we grieve his Spirit, as it is said by Isaiah. (Isaiah 63:10.) It was not, then, an usual or common mode of teaching which the Prophet adopted; but it was calculated to have more effect than plain instruction; for he shews that the wickedness of the people could no longer be endured.

Jehovah, he says, thine eyes, are they not on the truth? In this address to God there is an implied contrast between God and men. The most wicked, we know, flatter themselves while they can retain the good opinion and applause of the world;

and as long as they continue in honor, they slumber in their vices. This foolish confidence is what the Prophet evidently exposes; for he intimates that the eyes of God are different from those of mortals: men can see a very little way, hardly three fingers before them; but God penetrates into the inmost and the most hidden recesses of the heart: and the Prophet speaks thus of God's eyes, in order to shew how worthless are the opinions of men, who regard only a splendid outward appearance. By truth, the Prophet means, as in the first verse, integrity of heart. Hence without reason do they philosophize here, who seek to prove from this passage that we are made acceptable to God by faith only; for the Prophet does not speak of the faith by which we embrace free reconciliation with God, and become members of Christ. The meaning indeed is in no way obscure, which is this --- that God cares not for that external splendor by which men are captivated, according to what is said in 1 Samuel 16:7,

``Man sees what appears outwardly; but God looks on the heart.''

There the Holy Spirit expresses the same thing by ``heart'' as he does here by fidelity or ``truth.'' For Samuel shews that David's father was mistaken, because he brought forward his sons who excelled in their outward appearance: ``Man sees, ``he says, ``what appears outwardly; but God looks on the heart.''

We now understand the true meaning of the Prophet, --- that though hypocrites flatter themselves, and the whole world encourage them by their adulations, all this will not avail them; for they must at last come before the tribunal of God, and that before God truth only will be approved and honored.

He afterwards adds, Thou hast smitten them, and they have not grieved The Prophet reproves here the hardness of the people; for they had been smitten, but they repented not. Experience, as they say, is the teacher of fools; and it is an old proverb, that fools, when corrected, become wise. Both poets and historians have uttered such sayings. Since, then, the Jews had such a perverse disposition, that even scourges did not lead them to repentance, it was an evidence of extreme wickedness. And thus the Prophet here confirms what he had said before, that God would be merciful to them, if one just man could be found in the city: he confirms that declaration when he says, ``Thou hast smitten them, but they have not grieved.'' The Jews, no doubt, groaned under their scourges; yea, they howled and poured forth grievous complaints: for we know how petulantly they spoke evil of God. They then had grieved; but grief here is to be taken in a special sense, according to what Paul says of repentance, that its beginning is grief or sorrow. (2 Corinthians 7:9, 10.) In this sense it is that the Prophet says here, that they who had disturbed minds grieved not, for they did not feel that they had to do with God. He then means by this word what another Prophet means, when he says, that they did not regard the hand of him who smote them. (Isaiah 9:13.) For he does not say that they were so senseless as not to feel the strokes; but that the hand of God was not seen by them; and yet this is the principal thing in our sorrow. For if we blindly and violently cry out in our troubles, and cry, Wo, a hundred times, what is it all? our lamentations are only those of brute animals: but when we regard the hand of him who smites us, our grief then is of the right kind. Jeremiah says, that the Jews did not grieve in this

manner, for they did not perceive that they were justly chastened by God's hand.

He afterwards enlarges on the subject, Thou hast consumed them he says, and they refused to receive correction By saying that they had been consumed, he proves them guilty of extreme perverseness; for when God lightly chides us, it is no great wonder if, through our tardiness and sloth, we are not immediately roused; but when God doubles his strokes, yea, when he not only smites us with his rods, but draws his sword to consume us entirely; yea, when he thus deals with us, and executes his vengeance by terrible judgments, if then we are still torpid in our sins, and feel not how dreadful it is to endure his judgments, must we not be indeed wholly blinded by the devil? This is then the stupor which the Prophet now deplores in the Jews; for not only were they without a right feeling of grief when God smote them, but when they were even consumed, they did not receive or admit correction. And in this second clause he shews what we have already said, --- that the grief he speaks of is not to be taken for any sort of grief, but of that which regards God's judgment, and proves that we fear him.

He adds, They have hardened their faces as a rock, and lastly, they have refused to return The Prophet means, that the Jews were not only refractory, but that they were also without any shame. If, indeed, they had given every evidence of being ashamed, it would have been still useless, except there was, as we have said, an integrity of heart. But it often happens, that even the worst, though inwardly full of impiety and of contempt towards God, and of perverseness, do yet retain some measure of shame. In order to shew that the Jews had arrived to extreme impiety, the Prophet says, that they had hardened their faces, that is, that they were wholly without shame; for they had cast away everything like reason, and made no difference between right and wrong, between honesty and baseness. As, then, they had put off every human feeling, he says that nothing remained to be done, but that God, as he had previously declared, should execute on them extreme vengeance. And he repeats what he had said, --- that they refused to turn He means, that they sinned and went astray, not through mistake or want of knowledge, but that they disregarded their own safety through willful and deliberate wickedness, and that they knowingly and avowedly rejected God, so that they would not endure either his teaching or his corrections. [130]

[130] The literal rendering of this verse is as follows, — Jehovah! thine eyes, are they not on faithfulness? Smitten them hast thou, but they have not grieved; Thou hast consumed them, — they have refused to receive correction; Harder have they made their faces than a rock; They have refused to return. The “truth” here, and in the first verse, is regarded by Calvin and most commentators, as faithfulness towards men. But a right view of the context will shew that it refers to fidelity towards God. Of what does the preceding verse speak? Of unfaithfulness towards God — swearing falsely in his name; that is, making a false and hypocritical profession of him; and in this verse they are described as refusing to return to him. In the fifth and sixth verses they are represented as having “broken the yoke,“ and as having apostatized from him; and in the seventh their going after other gods is expressly mentioned. The word “judgment” has been taken in the same way, but not, in my view, agreeably to the context. To do judgment, is to do what is just and right; and “the way of Jehovah,“ and “the judgment of God,“ in the next verse, are the same, and hence put in apposition; the word “nor,“ in our version, being improperly introduced. The way of the Lord is the way he has prescribed in his word; and it is called his judgment, because it is what he has determined and ordained, or what is just and right. God had not only revealed his law, but had also appointed and ordained it for the people of Israel. His law is called a way, because it points out the course which we are to take; and it is his judgment, because it is what God has determined, fixed, and appointed. Hence in the fifth verse they are said to have broken the yoke and burst the bonds. The yoke was the law,

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as the devil ceases not to soothe us by his allurements, so that we may become torpid and stupefied, --- O grant, that thy word may so shine in our minds and hearts that we may not grow torpid in darkness; and do thou also so rouse us by thy Spirit, that we may attend to those warnings of thy prophets, by which thou wouldest bring us to the right way, that we may not perish; and may we so assiduously exercise repentance through the whole course of our life, that we may ever be displeased with ourselves on account of our sins; and may we judge ourselves daily, that we may turn away from us thy wrath, until having at length finished our warfare, which we have to carry on continually with our sins, we shall come to that blessed rest which has been procured for us in heaven, by Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Nineteenth

Jeremiah 5:4-5

4. Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God.

4. Et ego dixi, Certe (alii vertunt, forsan, {אך}) pauperes sunt hi, stulte egerunt, quia non cognoscunt viam Jehovae, judicium Dei sui:

5. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds.

5. Ibo ad optimates (ad magnos, ad verbum) et loquar apud eos; quia ipsi cognoscunt viam Jehovae judicium Dei sui: atque ipsi fregerunt jugum, ruperunt vincula.

Some think that the Prophet here makes an excuse for the people, and, as far as he could, extenuates their fault; but they are greatly mistaken. For there is no doubt but that he, by this comparison, more clearly shews how past remedy was then the state of things. The sum, then, of what he says is, --- that corruptions so prevailed, not only among the multitude, but also among the chief men, that there remained no soundness, as they say, from the head to the sole of the foot. Nearly the same thing, only in other words, is stated by Isaiah in the twenty-eighth chapter; for after having spoken generally against the people, he assails the leading men, and says that they were inebriated no less than the common people, that they were inebriated with wine and strong drink. But the meaning is, that they were like drunken men, because they felt no shame, while they abandoned themselves to deeds the most disgraceful.

To the same purpose is what Jeremiah says here, when he declares, that he thought that they were the poor who had thus sinned, and obscure men and of no repute; but that he had found the same thing among the chief men as among the common people. He might, indeed, have only said, ``Not only the lowest orders, the multitude, are become corrupt, but also the chief men, who ought to have excelled the rest.'' But much more striking is the comparison, when he says, ``It may be, that these miserable men have thus sinned because they understood not the law of God,

and the bonds were those of loyalty and obedience; or they were the bonds of justice, such as were justly ordained and imposed on them. — Ed.

nor is it a matter of wonder; but greater integrity will be found in the chief men.'' By speaking thus the Prophet brings the reader into the midst of the scene, and shews to him that not only all the people were guilty, but also the priests and the prophets, and the chief men in the state. The design of the Prophet is thus evident.

I said, he says, not that he thought so; for he saw that all things were in such a disorder, that nothing better could be hoped from the chief men than from the common people. This was clearly seen by the Prophet: but, as I have said, he wished to shew here, by a striking representation, how wretched was the condition of the whole people. He says, Surely The particle {אך}, ak, is an affirmative, or, as in the next verse, an adversative. Some, indeed, take it here in the sense of {אולי}, auli, perhaps, or, it may be; and regard it as signifying a concession, ``Let us grant this,'' he says; ``they are the poor, they are of no account, they are as it were the offscourings, who have thus sinned: it is nothing strange, if they conduct themselves thus foolishly, for they know not the way of Jehovah, nor the judgment of their God'' [131]

The law was, indeed, given to all without any difference; so that the common people had no excuse. But this evil has prevailed almost in all ages, --- that few attend to the teaching of the law; for there is no one who is not inclined to shake off this yoke. The common people, indeed, think that they have some excuse for neglecting it, because they have no leisure, and are not born for high stations. The Prophet then speaks according to this prevailing opinion; but he does not extenuate their fault who pleaded ignorance as an excuse, because they had not been taught in schools; for, as it has been said, God intended his law for the whole people without exception.

By the way of Jehovah and the judgment of God, the Prophet means the same thing: such a repetition is very common in Hebrew. God, in prescribing to us the rule of life, shews to us the way in which we are to walk: our life, indeed, is like to a course; and it is not God's will that we should run at random, but he sets before us the goal to which we are to proceed, and also directs us in the only way that leads to it. For it is the office of the law to call us back from our wandering, and to lead us to the mark set before us. Hence the law is called the way of Jehovah; and judgment, {משפת}, meshephet, as it was said yesterday, means rectitude, or a rule of life. What he calls in the first clause the law of Jehovah, he calls in the second the judgment of God And thus he shews that they were inexcusable, who made the objection that they were miserably ignorant, and knew nothing; for it was God's purpose to shew to them, no less than to the most learned, how they were to live.

He now adds, I will go to the great By the great he meant the priests and the prophets, as well as the king's counselors, and the king himself. I will go, [132] then,

[131] It is better to take {here{אך and in the next verse as an affirmative, Truly, surely, doubtless. Blayney, as well as Calvin, render ,{נואלו} ``have acted foolishly.'' The verb occurs in three other places, Numbers 12:11; Isaiah 19:13; Jeremiah 50:36. To be, or to become, foolish, or rather stupid, sottish, or stupidly ignorant, seems to be its meaning. It is here opposed to knowledge; and evidently refers to the state of the mind, and not to the conduct. Their sottishness was their idolatry. This is the special sin referred to throughout the passage, --- Then I said, Doubtless, the poor are these, they have become stupid, For they have not known the way of Jehovah, The judgment of their God. --- Ed.

[132] Literally it is, “I will go for myself,” — an idiomatic form of speech. The Welsh is exactly the same, af rhagof; which means, I will go forth; but it cannot be literally expressed in another language. After the verb, as in Hebrew, there is a preposition prefixed to “me.” — Ed.

he says, to the great, and will speak to them It is the same as though he had said, that everywhere his labor was in vain, for not only he spoke to the deaf when addressing the illiterate vulgar, but also when addressing the chief men. I have said, that the Prophet did not make the inquiry as one doubtful, but his purpose was to make the chief men ashamed of themselves, and also to confirm what he had said before, --- that not one just and upright man could be found in Jerusalem.

For they know, he says, etc. He declares the same thing in the same words. But we must ever remember, that the Prophet did not believe this; but he speaks of it as a thing that appeared probable: for who could have then thought that there was so much ignorance in the chief men? for they were in great esteem among the people. Since then the opinion prevailed, that all those who were rulers were well acquainted with the law, Jeremiah speaks according to what was commonly thought, and says, that they knew the way of Jehovah

He afterwards adds, But (for {אך}, ak, is to be taken here adversatively, and its proper meaning is, nay or but) they have alike broken the yoke, they have burst the bonds; that is, ``If any one thinks that the rulers are better than the common people, he is much deceived; for I have proofs enough to shew that their conduct is the same; they have broken the yoke of God no less than the most ignorant.'' By this repetition he more fully confirmed their defection, and at the same time reminded them how shameful it was, that prophets, priests, and rulers, who occupied the first places in the state, had become so unbridled in their vices. It follows ---

Jeremiah 5:6

6. Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased.

6. Propterea percussit eos leo e sylva; lupus solitudinum (alii per {ערבות} intelligunt vesperas, quia deducunt ab {ערב} quod significat vesperum; ita vertunt, lupus vesperinus) vastavit eos; pardus (alii vertunt, pantheram) vigilans super urbes eorum; quisquis egredietur, discerpet (vel, lacerabit;) quoniam multiplices sunt iniquitates eorum, auctae sunt defectiones ceorum.

Here, at length, God shews that he was moderate in his judgments, so that the wicked in vain charged him, as it is usual with them, with too much rigor.

Some render the words in the past tense, and think the sense to be, that the Prophet reminds the Jews that they had not been afflicted without reason by so many evils, as they had deserved heavier punishments. But another view may be taken; for we know that in Hebrew the tenses often change; and I am inclined to regard the future tense as intended; for the Prophet seems not here to record what they had already suffered, but to remind them of the heavy punishment that was awaiting them. Smite them shall the lion from the forest

The wolf is called the wolf of solitudes, because of his coming forth from the desert. Some render the words, ``the wolf of the evening;'' and this may be allowed. We indeed know, that in other places hungry wolves are called the wolves of the evening; for after having sought their prey in the day --- time, and finding none, they

become in the evening almost mad, and their hunger causes them to run furiously in all directions. This explanation, then, may be admitted. But as he says first, that the lion would come from the forest, it is more probable that the wolf is described as coming from the desert. [133] As to the general import of the passage there is not much difference.

He mentions here three wild beasts --- the lion, the wolf, and the leopard. By these wild beasts he understands no doubt the enemies, who would shortly attack them with the greatest cruelty. It is indeed true that the Jews, before the time in which Jeremiah spoke to them, had been afflicted with many evils; for God had not punished them only once, but had given them frequent warnings; and had there been any hope of repentance, they might have still continued in safety, though considerably reduced. But Jeremiah seems to predict future punishment: he therefore refers, not only to the Egyptians and the Assyrians, but also to other enemies. For that people, we know, were hated by all their neighbors, and had suffered grievous wrongs even from their own kindred. Since, then, many nations were hostile to the Jews, it is nothing strange that the Prophet enumerates here three sorts of wild beasts; as though he had said, that enemies would come from every quarter, who would, like lions, wolves, and leopards, vent their fury on them, because they had so often, and for so long a time, provoked God's wrath. At the same time, God does here check those false complaints which are wont to be often alleged by the wicked, and shews that he is a righteous Judge, and that the punishments he inflicted could not be blamed by the Jews: and it was for this purpose that he used the particle, Wherefore --- {כז}-{על}, ol-kan.

He also adds, A leopard shall watch, that he may tear all who shall go out of the cities This language is no doubt metaphorical; and what he means is, that when the enemies would occupy the land, the Jews would be shut up in their cities, and would not venture to go forth, for dangers would await them everywhere.

At the end of the verse he repeats again, and speaks more fully of what he meant by ``Wherefore --- {כז}-{על}, ``at the beginning of the verse; [134] for he says, Because multiplied have their transgressions, and increased have their defections By these words he further proves what he had said, that God is a righteous judge, even when he seems to be too severe: for it could not have been otherwise, but that he must have visited with extreme vengeance a people so abandoned and irreclaimable. Nor does he only call them wicked, and apostates, but he says that their iniquities, [135] or evil deeds, were many, and that their defections had increased And by the last

[133] The word, as found here, is never used for the evening; it ever means the desert, or uncultivated plains. The plural termination of the word, when it means the evening, is -{,{ים and not ,{וח}- as here. See Numbers 22:1; Joshua 5:10; Jeremiah 39:5. In these verses it is rendered ``plains;'' they were evidently uncultivated, and might properly be called deserts. The Vulgate and the Targum have led commentators astray as to this word. The Septuagint have completely misunderstood it, and have rendered the sentence, ``The wolf even to the houses ({ἕως} {τῶν} {οἰκιῶν}) has destroyed them.'' The version of Blayney is, ``The wolf of the plains:`` and he says in a note, that they were ``unenclosed commons.'' used for sheepwalks, which were commonly ``infested with wolves.'' --- Ed

[134] This illative, “wherefore,” or therefore, or, for this cause, is both retrospective and anticipative. It is a reason given for what is contained in the latter part of the last verse, and for what is contained in the last words of this verse; it anticipates the particle “because” before “multiplied.” — Ed.

[135] It is rendered “{ἀσεβείας} --- impieties, ``by the Septuagint; ``prevarications'' by the Vulgate; ``rebellions'' by the Targum. It does not mean ``iniquities,`` but willful violations of the law in matters connected with God's worship and service. The

expression he amplifies their guilt: for though {פשע}, pesho, does not mean simply to offend, but to act wickedly; yet to fall away from God is a baser and a more atrocious sin. We hence learn, that such was the wickedness of the Jews, that it could not be corrected by common means or moderate punishment. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 5:7

7. How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses.

7. Quomodo super hoc parcam tibi (hoc est, parcerem, nam debet resolvi futurum tempus in modum potentialem, quomodo, inquit, parcerem tibi super hoc?) Filii tui dereliquerunt me, et jurarunt in non Deo: ego autem saturavi eos, et scortati sunt (tamen scortati sunt;) et domus meretricis congregaverunt se (vel, in domum meretricis, ita subaudienda erit litera {ב} servilis.)

There is here what rhetoricians call a conference: for God seems here to seek the judgment of the adverse party, with whom he contends, on the cause between them, though it was sufficiently clear; and this is a proof of confidence. When advocates wish to shew that there is nothing doubtful or obscure, they thus deliberate with the opposite party, --- ``Why, I will propose the matter privately to yourself; have you anything to say? Even if you were at liberty to determine the question, would not reason compel you to pronounce such a judgment as this?'' So now God shews that he was constrained, as it were, by necessity to inflict on the Jews a most severe punishment, and intimates that he was not, as it were, at liberty to do otherwise. ``If I am, ``he says, ``the judge of the world, is it possible that they can escape unpunished, who thus openly provoke me? Should I not expose to ridicule my glory? and should I not also divest myself of my own power? I should cease to be what I am, and in a manner deny myself, were I not to punish a people so wicked and irreclaimable.'' We now perceive the Prophet's meaning.

Some consider {ו}, vau, to be understood, and take {אי}, ai, for {אין}, ain, and read thus, ``I will not spare thee for this.'' But as there is no reason to make any change, and many agree in the view that has been given, I prefer to follow what has been most commonly received. The meaning of {אי}, ai, in Hebrew is ``where;'' but it also means ``how: ``and here it is to be understood, not of place, but of manner, ``How could I for this be propitious to you?''

We see how God, as it were, deliberates with the opposite party, and even appeals to them for judgment, ``Say now, were I to allow you so much liberty and power as to decide the question, could I, who am the judge of the world, spare you who are guilty of such vices?''

Thy sons have forsaken me This was the first sin: and when God complained that he was forsaken, he intimated that the people had willfully, and from deliberate wickedness, cast off the yoke; for the same thing could not have been said of hea-

other word means apostasies, defections from God, rendered by the Septuagint, ``{ἀποστρόφαις} --- turnings away, ``and so by the Vulgate and the Targum. They were defections to various forms of idolatry. Their idols increased in number. The Septuagint render the last sentence thus, ``They have become strong ({ἴσχυσας}) in their turnings away.'' The Vulgate and the Targum are the same. The Verb means{עצם} an increase in quality or in quantity. But both verbs may be rendered here as transitives, --- Because they have multiplied their transgressions, They have strengthened (or increased) their apostasies. --- Ed.

thens. It is indeed true, if we have regard to the beginning, that all may be charged with defection, for God had revealed himself to the sons of Adam and of Noah; and when they fell away into superstitions, they became apostates. But the defection of the Jewish people was much more recent, and less to be borne: nay, when they boasted that they were God's people, who could have alleged the pretense of ignorance? We now then see what the Prophet means when he says, that God had been forsaken by the people.

He then adds, They have sworn by a no- god He means, by stating a part for the whole, that the worship of God was become corrupt and vitiated: for swearing, as it was stated yesterday, is a part of God's worship. Whenever we swear by God's name, we profess that we are under his power, and that we cannot escape if we swear falsely: we also ascribe to him his glory as the God of truth; and we further testify that nothing escapes him, or is hid from his view. Hence, by saying here that the Israelites swore by a no- god, he means that God was deprived of his own right. They were indeed guilty of other sins; but, as it has been stated, the Prophet includes under one kind all the superstitions which then prevailed among the people. It was then the same as though he had said, that they worshipped idols and gods, whom they had devised for themselves.

He adds a circumstance which enhanced their guilt, I have filled them, he says, and they have committed adultery There is here a striking alliteration, which must not be omitted, he had said, {ישבעון}, ishbon, ``they have sworn;'' and now he says, {אשבע}, ashbo, ``I have filled them.'' The only difference is in a point; when placed on the left side of {ש}, shin, the word means to fill, and when on the right, to swear. [136] The Prophet then says, that they had sworn to another God, and yet had been filled God shews here how base and disgraceful had been the ingratitude of the people; for they had been filled to the full with all blessings, and yet they did not acknowledge their own God, who had been to them a Father, so kind and bountiful: I have filled them, he says, and they have committed adultery

Now this passage teaches us, that they who go astray, when allured by God's paternal kindness and bounty, are on that account the more unworthy of pardon. When men grow wanton against God, while he is kindly indulging them, they no doubt treasure up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath, as Paul tells us in Romans 2:5. Let us then take heed, lest we indulge ourselves, while God is, as it were, indulging us; and lest prosperity should lead us to wantonness: but let us learn to submit ourselves willingly to him, even because he thus kindly and sweetly invites us to himself; and when he shews himself so loving, let us learn to love him.

He says, that they committed adultery This may be taken metaphorically: but as in the next verse he inveighs against their vagrant lusts and adulteries, this phrase may be taken in its literal sense. I yet think that adultery here is to be understood figuratively, as meaning that they had no spiritual chastity, inasmuch as they did not give God his own glory. He further says, And at the house of the harlot have they assembled together The word ``house'' may be taken in the nominative case, as the Jews might have been called the house of the harlot; as though the Prophet had said,

[136] This has been done by the Punctuists, and is no part of the language. — Ed.

that all Jerusalem and Judea were like brothels. But some consider {ב}, beth, to be understood, so that they assembled themselves, as it were, at the house of a harlot; and that he thus alludes to the temple. And it is a mark of great shamelessness, when many adulterers or wanton men assemble in one house; for most are ashamed of their adulteries, so that they endeavor to hide their baseness: but when they come together in troops, as though under an uplifted banner, it is a proof that there is no shame, but that they thus disregard all decency, like brute beasts. The most suitable meaning then is, that they are said to have assembled together in brothels, because they gloried in their own superstitions and sacrileges. [137] It follows ---

Jeremiah 5:8

8. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife.

8. Equi saginati (alii vertunt, armati, intelligunt phaleratos) mane surgentes (alii vertunt, trahentes, deducunt a ,{רשמ} sed rectius alii deducunt a ,{מכש} et nomen esse existimant;) quisque ad uxorem proximi sui hinnit (est quidem futurum tempus, sed significat continuum actum.)

Jeremiah comes now, I think, to the second table, and mentions one kind of evil; but his object was to shew that there was no chastity, no faithfulness, no honesty in that people. He therefore compares them to wanton and lustful horses, and thus exposes their infamous conduct. Had he said that every one did lie in wait for the bed of his neighbor, it would have been a heinous crime; but when he calls their lust neighing, and calls them horses, and those well fed, and who rise early after they are filled, he doubtless shews that such was their incontinence, that they were not only wanton and adulterous, but that they were worse and more base, for they differed nothing from lustful horses, and horses well fed. Some read the last word ``armed, ``deducing it from {יון} izan, which means to be armed; and others derive it from {זון}, zun, which signifies to eat, and hence they take {מזון}, muzan, for food. There is indeed no doubt but that it means here ``fed, ``or fat; for why should he call them armed horses? What some say, that they rose early after having committed adultery, in order to exhibit their disgrace, and to boast of their vices, is too far-fetched. What is meant is, that they were strong horses, and active, and that they rose up early after having been well fed. [138]

We now then understand the Prophet's object: the sum of the whole is, --- that

[137] The last line may be rendered thus, — And the house of the harlot they crowd. The verb for "crowd" seems here to be transitive, though it be intransitive in Micah 5:1. — Ed.

[138] The literal rendering of this verse, and countenanced by ancient versions, is as follows, — Horses well fed! libidinous have they become; They neigh, every one at the wife of his neighbor. Both Venema and Blayney agree in giving this meaning. It does not seem, when the whole context is viewed, that adultery here is to be taken in its literal sense. It is spiritual adultery, that is, idolatry, that is referred to throughout the chapter. Besides, the comparison in this verse is such, that its application is more suitable to idolatrous acts than to those which are adulterous. The same may be said of what is found in the preceding verse, — that they crowded the house of the harlot. This is not so much the case in adultery as in idolatry, when people fill their idolatrous temples. A simile is sometimes carried beyond what is actually the case, in order to convey a right idea of what it is intended to illustrate. When they are said to be like well-fed stallions, and neighing at the wives of their neighbors, the purpose was to shew with what intense ardor they were devoted to idolatry: and the degrading comparison was no doubt made in order to pour contempt on their mad propensity: it was like the impetuous instinct of an animal, uncontrolled by any reason, persuasion, or remonstrance. — Ed.

there was no chastity among the Jews, for they gave themselves up to wanton lusts, not only like adulterers and whoremongers, but like lascivious horses. Nevertheless, as we have said, he includes here, under incontinency, thefts, frauds, rapines, and all vices of this kind; for he no doubt charges the Jews as guilty of transgressing against the second table of the law. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 5:9

9. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

9. An non super his (vel, super hoc) visitabo (vel, non visitarem,) dicit Jehova? et an in gente quae talis est (quae secundum hanc) non se ulciscetur anima mea?

God again holds, as it were, a conference with them, and for this purpose, --- that he might check all their complaints and close their mouths, lest they should object and say, that they were too severely treated. That this objection then might be removed, God repeats that he could not pardon such atrocious sins. And this principle is adopted, that it was impossible not to punish such wicked men who would not repent. For since God is the Judge of the world, he can no more surrender his judgment than his essence. As, then, the majesty of God and his office of a Judge are inseparably connected, the Prophet concludes, that what the Jews thought was impossible, that is, that they could escape unpunished, and yet continue to provoke God, as it were, by open war, with their dreadful sins: Should I not then visit for this, saith Jehovah?

Here is introduced the name of Jehovah. An earthly judge may pardon the ungodly and the worst of men; but this cannot be done by God; for whenever God pardons, he leads sinners to repentance: so that he never suffers sins to be unpunished. For he who repents becomes his own judge, and thus anticipates God's judgment. Where then there is true conversion, God shews no indulgence to sins. But when persistency in sins is such, that they who are warned despise all instruction, it is impossible that God should forgive; as in that case he would renounce his own glory, which can never be. Should I not then visit for this, saith Jehovah?

And on such a nation as this should not vengeance my soul take? God speaks here after the manner of men, for he seeks no vengeance; and when he speaks of his soul, even this is not strictly suitable to him; but there is here nothing obscure; for what is meant is, that he is at enmity with wickedness, as it is said in Psalm 5:5, that he cannot bear iniquity. Since it is so, it follows that he must either be thrust from his celestial throne, or punishment must be inflicted on the wicked, who remain perverse and set no end nor bounds to their sins. Whenever then delusion creeps over us and Satan seeks by his allurements to lead us to forget God's judgment, let this come to our minds --- that God would not be God, except he were to punish sins. It is then necessary that he should punish sins or be displeased with us: but, as it has been said, he cannot be inconsistent with himself or dissimilar in his nature, since no change can take place in him. Either then his hand is stretched out to punish our sins, or his judgment must be anticipated by us. And how can this be done? By learning to bring sentence against ourselves, by becoming displeased with our sins.

When therefore our conversion will be of this kind, then God will be merciful to us;

and thus he will not pardon our sins, as though he approved of them, or as though he did not exercise his office as a judge. But as I have said, what is here taught is rightly addressed to those who are either refractory, or whom Satan renders so stupid and forgetful, that they call not themselves to an account; in short, what is here said will render the ungodly, who go on in their perverseness, inexcusable, or it will awake those who are healable, that they may judge themselves, and not wait until God stretches forth his hand to execute extreme punishment.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are at this day inclined to those vices, to which we learn thine ancient people were too much given, --- O grant, that we, being governed by thy Spirit, may not harden ourselves against those thy holy warnings, by which thou daily reprovest us and our sins, but that we may be teachable and obedient: and as we have hitherto too much resisted thee and carried on war with thy justice, may we learn to fight with ourselves and with our sins, and rely on thy word, until we gain the victory, and at length attain that triumph, which has been prepared for us in heaven by Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Twentieth

Jeremiah 5:10

10. Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they are not the LORD'S.

10. Ascendite muros ejus et diruite (vel, dissipate;) et consumptionem ne feceritis (vel potius, finem;) auferte propagines ejus (vel, ramos, vel, dentes murorum, ut alii vertunt, vel, pinnas,) quia non sunt Jehovae.

Here God by the mouth of his Prophet addresses the enemies of his people, whom he had appointed to be the ministers of his vengeance: and this was usual with the prophets, when they sought more effectually to rouse and more sharply to touch the hearts of men; for we know how great is their indifference when God summons them to judgment. As then Jeremiah saw that simple instruction availed but little, he used this mode of speaking. He then in the person of God addresses the Chaldeans, and bids them to come to attack Jerusalem. The prophets often speak thus, --- ``Hiss will God for the Egyptians,'' or, ``Sound shall the trumpet, and he will send for the Chaldeans.'' (Isaiah 5:26; Isaiah 7:18.) But the representation is more effectual to penetrate into the hearts of men, when the Prophet at God's command assembles enemies as a celestial herald and bids them what to do, even to destroy the whole city.

He says first, Ascend ye her walls By which words he intimates, that the Jews in vain boasted of the height of their walls, for God would make their enemies to ascend them, so that the entrance would not be difficult. They hoped indeed that they were safe, because the city was well fortified. Hence he says, that they were deceived; and he exposes their folly, for their walls would not protect them.

He afterwards adds, An end do not make This sentence is explained in two ways. Some take it in a good sense, as though God mitigated the extremity of their punishment, according to the meaning which some attach to the words in the last chapter; for though God in that passage terrified the Jews, yet they consider that by way of

mitigation this was added, ``I will not yet make a consummation,'' that is, there will be some remaining. And the prophets are wont thus to speak, when they intend to shew that some seed will ever remain, so that the Church shall not wholly be destroyed. Thus also do the same interpreters explain this passage, as though God had said, that the ruin of Jerusalem would be such that the Church would still continue, for there would be no consummation. But others take {כלה}, cale, as signifying an end: and this meaning is more suitable; for God in this verse severely threatens the Jews with destruction. It is no objection, that it is said elsewhere, that the consummation would not be complete; for it is quite evident that the prophets do not always adopt the same mode in speaking: when they denounce vengeance on the reprobate, they leave no hope; and so this mode of speaking often occurs, ``I will make an end:'' but when they address the faithful, they moderate the severity of their threatenings by saying, ``God will not make a consummation.'' I am therefore disposed to take their view, whom regard consummation here as signifying an end; and {כלל}, calal, means to finish. The meaning then is, ``Demolish the city, and let there be no end,`` that is, destroy it entirely. [139]

To the same purpose is what immediately follows, Take away her shoots, or her branches, or the teeth of her walls, as some render the word. I think, however, that the Prophet refers to the width of the walls in their foundations; for we know that walls are so built, that the foundation is wider than the upper structure. The word which the Prophet uses, means shoots, which spread far and wide. They who render it, the wings of the walls, seem not to me to understand what the Prophet means; for he speaks not here of the top of the walls, but of the foundations, as though he had said, ``Overthrow or demolish from the foundation the walls of the city: ``and why? They are not Jehovah's, he adds. The Jews were inflated with this empty confidence, --- that they were safe under the protection of God; for they imagined that God was the guardian of the city, because the sanctuary and the altar were there. Hence the Prophet declares, that the walls or the foundations were not God's. [140] Nor could it have been objected, that it is said elsewhere, that the city had been founded by the Lord: God had indeed chosen his habitation and his throne there; but on this condition --- that the people should faithfully worship him. When Jerusalem was made a den of thieves, God departed thence, according to what is said by Ezekiel in chapter 14 (Ezekiel 14). Here then the Prophet reproves that foolish confidence, by which the Jews deceived themselves, when they thought that God was in a manner bound never to forsake the defense of the city. He denies that their walls and foundations were God's; for the Jews by their sins had so polluted the whole place, that God could not dwell in such filth. It follows ---

Jeremiah 5:11

11. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the Lord.

[139] See Note on Jeremiah 4:27.

[140] It is true the word means shoots or branches; but as the root means to spread, it evidently signifies here battlements, bulwarks, or ramparts. It is rendered "{ὑποστηρίγματα} --- props, pillars,'' by the Septuagint; ``propagines --- shoots,'' by the Vulgate; ``foundations,'' by the Syriac and Arabic; and ``palaces, or towers,'' by the Targum. Our version has the most suitable word --- ``battlements.'' Blayney has ``branches,`` and thinks that the cities of Judea are meant; but this is not suitable to the context. --- Ed.

11. Quoniam transgrediendo transgressi sunt in me domus Israel et domus Jehudah, dick Jehova.

The verb {בגד}, begad, means to deceive, to act perfidiously. God then charges the Jews here with perfidy, because they had revolted from him: for he does not only complain that they had in some measure sinned against him, and that he was therefore offended with them, but he charges them with general defection. Hence he says, that both the Israelites and the Jews had become perfidious and apostates. The people, we knew, were now divided into two kingdoms: and though Jeremiah had been given especially as a teacher to the tribe of Judah, it was yet his duty to labor also for the Israelites. The kingdom of Israel was now in some measure fallen, for four tribes had been driven into exile, and the kingdom was dismembered and feeble. He yet wished to do all the good he could to the remnant. Hence he says here, that they were wicked apostates, for they had acted perfidiously towards God. [141] And as this charge was heinous, and might have deeply wounded their minds, he ascribes to God what the Jews would have hardly endured as coming from him; and says, thus saith Jehovah, as though he had said, ``There is no reason for you to contend with me, as though I had dealt severely with you: contend with God himself, since he it is who declares that you are all perfidious.'' He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 5:12

12. They have belied the Lord, and said, It is not he; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine:

12. Negarunt Jehovam (alii vertunt, mentiti sunt Jehovae,) et dixerunt, Non est, et non veniet super nos malum; et gladium et famem non videbimus.

He expresses more clearly and fully what he had previously said. Their perfidy was, that they had denied God I do not wholly reject what others have said, that they lied to God: but as {ב} is here used after {כחש}, I cannot see that it means to lie. It ought to have been in that case, {כחשו}, {ליהוה} cacheshu La-Jeve: but as it is {ביהוה}, Be-Jeve, I doubt not but that he simply declares that they denied God; and the context seems to require this meaning; for he immediately adds, that they said there was no God [142] This certainly was not to lie to God, but to reject him as one

[141] The verb {בגד}, when followed by as{ב} here, means to deal deceitfully, perfidiously, or treacherously, with one. See Exodus 21:8; Judges 9:23; Lamentations 1:2. It may be rendered here to dissemble, --- For they dissembling have dissembled with me, The house of Israel and the house of Judah, saith Jehovah. As the verb is repeated, if we render it ``to act perfidiously,`` instead of repeating the words, to give them their force and meaning, we must say, For they have dealt most perfidiously with me. To ``deal unfaithfully,'' as rendered by Blayney, is too feeble an expression. To ``prevaricate'' is the word used by the Vulgate, and the same by the Septuagint and the Targum. --- Ed.

[142] According to all the instances in which the verb occurs, followed by {ב, {ב its meaning is what Calvin states, though not so rendered uniformly in our version. The verb, followed by {ב}, occurs elsewhere five times, --- Leviticus, 6:2, 3; Joshua 24:27; Job 8:18; Isaiah 59:13; Hosea 9:2. In Leviticus 6:3, {וכחש ,{בה} ought to be rendered, ``and denieth it;'' and so the verb ought to be, rendered in the previous verse, ``and deny to his neighbor his deposit,'' etc. It is rendered here ``lied to the Lord'' by the Septuagint and the Targum; and ``denied the Lord'' by the Vulgate and the Syriac, and so also by Piscator, Venema, and Blayney. The denial seems to have been as to the Lord speaking in his prophets. Calvin appears to have gone too far in saying that they denied his existence. The expression which follows, ``Not he,`` means that he was not in the prophets. The import is correctly given in our version, ``It is not he,`` that is, who speaks in the prophets. The verse might be literally given thus, --- 12. And they deny Jehovah, And say, ``It is not he, And come upon us shall not evil, And the sword and the famine we shall not see.'' Then the following verse, which is a continuation of what they said, proves clearly what the meaning of this is, --- 13. ``And the prophets shall be wind, For the word is not in them: Thus shall it happen to them,'' or, Thus shall it be done to them. That is, they shall be found out to be like the wind, having spoken nothing real, such as shall be accomplished. Indeed the last line may be translated thus, --- Thus shall he do to (or, deal with) them. The reference in this case is to God, who, they thought, would render abortive, or turn as it were into wind, what the prophets had threatened. Their blindness and presumption appear to us to have been extreme. --- Ed.

who did not exist. As then the sense would be less significant, were we to say, that they lied to God, I am inclined to take the other meaning, that they denied God; that is, that they wholly disregarded him or sought to erase the remembrance of him.

The reason which follow requires special notice: They have said, He is not To render this more clear, he says, that they boasted of impunity. It seemed, no doubt, to exceed credibility, when the Prophet said that God was denied by the Jews; but that they might not evade the charge, he continued it, they have said, He is not We are further to consider why he brought against them so grievous and so atrocious a charge: it was, because they boasted that they should be free from the punishments which the prophets had threatened.

We then see what Jeremiah alleges against them, even their contempt and also their perverseness. They felt themselves safe notwithstanding the prophetic threatenings. The Prophet says, this is nothing less than wholly to deny God. Were we judges, this declaration might appear too severe: but let us pause, and acquiesce in what the Holy Spirit has pronounced.

And this is a remarkable passage, whence we may learn how abhorred by God is their indifference, who harden themselves against his threatenings, and wholly disregard his judgment. For if we acknowledge him as God, his power as a judge ought not to be taken away. What does God's name mean? Doubtless they who imagine that God remains quiet in heaven and enjoys his leisure and his rest, though they may not in words deny God, yet treat him with mockery: there is in them at the same time no religion and no thought of a divine being. Let us then carefully notice this passage, in which the Prophet testifies that God is denied by us, except we be moved by his threatenings; for the torpidity in which we indulge ourselves, when God denounces his judgment on us, is the same as the denial of him; nor is there anything by which they can extenuate their sin who thus despise the vengeance of God. For the Holy Spirit has once for all declared, that all who trifle with the prophets do in their hearts say, that there is no God, inasmuch as they deprive him of his power and of his office, and leave him only a naked essence; nay, they make him only a creature of the imagination or a mere phantom.

We now then understand the meaning of the Prophet: he more fully explains the perfidy with which he had charged the Jews; for he says that they denied God, and said, He is not; and they proved that they did all this, for they did not believe the evil to be at hand which the prophets had announced. It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 5:13

13. And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them.

13. Et Prophetae erunt in ventum, et sermo non est in eis; sic fiet illis.

The Prophet goes on with the same subject; and this passage is worthy of especial notice, as it commends to us in no common way the public preaching of the truth. For what can be imagined more abominable than to deny God? yet if his word is not allowed to have authority, it is the same as though its despisers attempted to thrust God from heaven, or denied his existence. We hence see how the majesty of God is, as it were, indissolubly connected with the public preaching of his truth. The design

of this verse is the same, in which Jeremiah refers to the contempt manifested by the people.

He introduces the Jews as saying, The prophets shall become wind, there is not in them the word, and the evil with which they have threatened us, shall come upon their own heads It may have been, that the Jews did not openly give vent to such a blasphemous language; but so gross was the contempt they shewed towards the prophets, that this impiety was sufficiently conspicuous in their whole life. It was not then without reason that the Prophet charged them with so base an impiety, that they said, that the prophets would become wind. The same is the case now; the greater part, when God thunders and gives proofs of his vengeance by his servants, ridicule everything, and heedlessly cast away every fear, --- ``Oh, they are mere words; for the preachers fulminate boldly and terribly in the pulpit; but the whole vanishes, and whatever they denounce on us will fall on their own heads.'' We see at this day that many ungodly and profane men use such a bantering language as this. Though it might not have been, as I have said, that the Jews dared thus openly to shew their contempt towards God; yet the Holy Spirit, who extends his authority over the hearts, minds, and feelings of men, justly charged them with this gross impiety. It may also be learnt from other places, that they made such advances in audacity, that they hesitated not to treat with scoffs the threatenings announced by the prophets. However this may have been, the Prophet sets forth by a striking representation how great was the contemptuous perverseness of the people towards God: for there is here a vivid description, by which he sets as it were before our eyes how impious the Jews had become; inasmuch as they dared openly to assault the prophets and willfully to charge them with declaring what was vain, The prophets, they said, shall become wind; and farther, There is not in them the word

By these words the Jews denied that the prophets were to be believed, however they might pretend God's name, for they boasted falsely that this or that was committed to them from above. Thus it was, as we see, that every instruction was trodden under foot, and the same we find to be the case in the present day; for what reverence is manifested anywhere for God's word? This passage then ought to be especially noticed by us; for it shews as in a mirror to what extent of audacity and madness men will break forth when they begin to discredit God's word.

They afterwards add, Thus shall it be done to them; or, ``May it be thus done to them;'' for some regard the words as an imprecation, as though the wicked had said, ``Let the prophets find to their own destruction what the sword, the famine, and the pestilence are; as they cease not continually to stun our ears with these terrible things, may they themselves experience these scourges of God.'' But we may retain the form of the verb, Thus shall it be done to them; [143] as though they set themselves in opposition to God's servants, and pretended that they were God's prophets, ``Oh! we have a prophecy too: they terrify us by announcing the sword, the famine, and the pestilence; we can in our turn retaliate on them, and declare

[143] This sentence is left out in the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Arabic, but retained by the Vulgate, — "Haec ergo evenient illis — These things shall therefore come to them." This meaning the original will hardly bear. The reference seems to be to the Prophets becoming wind, being so proved by the event. — Ed

that the pestilence, the war, and the famine are nigh them; for what authority have they thus to assail us? Have we not authority to do the same to them?'' We now then perceive what is meant in this last clause. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 5:14

14. Wherefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.

14. Ergo sic dicit Jehova, Deus exercituum, Quia protulistis verbum hoc: Ecce ego dabo verba mea. (vel, ponam verba mea) in ore tuo quasi ignem (vel, in ignem,) et populus hic, lignum, et vorabit eos.

God shews here how intolerable to him was their wantonness in despising the prophets, through whom he would have himself attended to. Though Christ did not refer to this passage, when he said,

``He who hears you hears me,
and he who despises you despises me,''
(Luke 10:16)

yet it contains an eternal law; for God's will from the beginning has been, that his servants should be obeyed, as though he himself had come down from heaven. Hence the Jews dealt no less contumeliously with God in despising his prophets, than if they had dared to treat God himself with contempt. God then now shews how much he abhorred that madness, through which they rendered void all the labors of his servants.

Therefore thus saith Jehovah, the God of hosts Jeremiah made this preface, that he might more effectually rouse the Jews; for if he had omitted Thus saith Jehovah, and had begun thus, ``Because ye have announced this word, behold, as fire shall be the word of God, ``his doctrine would have been objected to, and treated with contempt. But now, by alleging the name of God, and that not simply, but by adorning it with a high attribute, and calling him ``the God of hosts, ``he makes known his power in order to strike them with fear. He then says, ``Thus saith Jehovah, the God of hosts, Because ye have spoken this word, ``etc. Here he changes the persons often; and it behooved him to do so, that there might be more force and point in what he said. He ought to have said in the third person, ``Because they have spoken thus, Behold, I will make my words in thy mouth, ``etc.: but he now addresses the people, and then he turns to his servant Jeremiah. He therefore says, ``Ye have indeed spoken thus;'' that is, ``Ye have scoffingly spoken, as though my prophets had nothing but the empty sound of words;'' Behold, he says, I will make my words in thy mouth like fire, (he thus addresses the Prophet,) and this people shall be wood, and the fire shall devour them

God compares his own word to fire, not as in other places, nor for the same reason; but this similitude has a particular meaning, --- that the prophetic word would consume the people as fire consumes dry wood or straw. In other places the word of God is called fire, because it kindles the hearts of men, because it cleanses or burns the filth within. But he treats not here of the benefit or the fruit which the faithful derive from God's word: but God declares only that the doctrine of the Prophet would

prove fatal to the people; and hence he expressly says, ``I make my words in thy mouth like fire.'' Had he said, ``Behold, my words shall be like fire, and this people shall be stubble, ``it would not have been sufficiently expressive. But as the people had been accustomed to scoff and say, ``Ah! what are these prophets, and what are their words? they beat the air only;'' as then the Jews had been wont to speak in this manner, he now replies to them, and says, ``I will make my words in thy mouth like fire;'' that is, Thy tongue alone shall be more than sufficient to destroy the whole people. Jeremiah teaches here the same thing with Paul, when he said,

``We have vengeance in readiness against all altitude which rises against the gospel.''
(2 Corinthians 10:4, 5)

For it has ever been an evil, common to all ages, either to neglect, or wholly to despise the servants of God. When Paul saw that the gospel was despised by many, he said that he and other ministers had vengeance in readiness; as though he had said, ``As many words as we speak shall be so many swords to slay all the ungodly; and though their hardness now reject the judgment of God, their perverseness shall avail them nothing. Let them now then know that there is so much power in my word, as though God were openly to put forth his hand from heaven, as though he were to dart forth his lightnings.'' The same thing is what Jeremiah means here, Behold, he says, I will make my words in thy mouth fire; that is, there will be so much power in thy words, that the ungodly shall know to their own loss that thou art the executioner of my vengeance.

This passage ought to be carefully observed by us, lest by our ingratitude we shall so provoke God's wrath against us, as that his word, which is destined for our food, shall be turned to be a fire to us. For why has God appointed the ministers of his gospel, except to invite us to become partakers of his salvation, and thus sweetly to restore and refresh our souls? And thus the word of God is to us like water to revive our hearts: it is also a fire, but for our good, a cleansing, and not a consuming fire: but if we obstinately reject this fire, it will surely turn to answer another end, even to devour us, and wholly to consume us.

But he says that this people would be wood: as the ungodly set up an iron front against God, they think they can thus drive to a distance his vengeance; the Prophet now laughs to scorn this madness, and says that they would be like wood or straw. It follows ---

Jeremiah 5:15

15. Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the Lord: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say.

15. Ecce ego adduco super vos gentem e longinquo, domus Israel, dicit Jehova; gentem duram (hoc est, quae dura erit, quia sequitur (,{אוה} gentem quae est e seculo, gentem cujus non tenebis (vel, cognosces) linguam (nam relativum est ({ו} et non audies quid loquatur.

The Prophet shews here how the people would become like straw or dry wood; for God would bring a sure calamity which they did not fear. But the context is to be

here observed: the Prophet had said, that the word in his mouth would be like fire; he now transfers this to the Assyrians and Chaldeans. Now these things have the appearance of being inconsistent; but we have already shewn that all the scourges of God depended on the power of his word: when, therefore, the city was cut off by the Assyrians and Chaldeans, then the fire from the mouth of Jeremiah broke forth to destroy the city and the people.

In short, Jeremiah intimates, that when the enemies came, no account was to be made of their strength nor of their forces, and that they would not bring with them any aids for the war, but that there would be the execution of what he had said, of what had proceeded from his mouth; for we shall elsewhere see that he was sent by God to besiege the city; but with what forces? He was alone and unarmed; this is true; but this siege was not understood by the wicked and reprobate, yet it was not without its effect; for as the Prophet spoke, so God executed what had proceeded from his mouth. We hence see that the Chaldeans proceeded as it were from the mouth of the Prophet, like willing enemies, who throw darts to demolish the walls of a city, who east stones and upset the walls by warlike engines, or like those who at this day use other warlike machines, by which they demolish cities. What then are all these instruments of war? They are the fire which God casts forth by the mouth of his servants; and the truth which had been declared by them, has accompanying it all those engines of war which can destroy not only one city and one people, but the whole world, when it shall so please him.

I bring then upon you a nation from far We have said elsewhere why the Prophet refers to long distance, even because the Jews thought that there was no danger nigh them from nations so remote, as though we were to speak of the Turks at this day, ``Oh! they have to fight with other nations: let those who are near them contend with the Turks, for we may live three or four ages in quietness.'' We see such indifference prevailing in the present day. Hence the Prophet, in order to deprive the Jews of this vain confidence, says that this nation was near at hand, though coming from remote quarters.

He says that they were a hard, or a strong nation, and a nation from antiquity He means not simply that it was brave through age, but that it was hard and ferocious; for he says afterwards that they were all {גברים}, geberim, that is, valiant. He then calls it a hard nation, because it was cruel, and he afterwards mentions the barbarity of that nation. But he says first that it was from antiquity: for it generates spirits more ferocious, when a nation has ruled for a long time, and from a period out of memory: this very antiquity is wont to inflate the minds of men with pride, and to render them more ferocious. He says then, that it was from antiquity

He afterwards speaks of its barbarity: Thou wilt not, he says, understand its language, nor wilt thou hear what it speaks [144] By language, we know, not only words, but also feelings are communicated. Language is the expression of the mind, as it is

[144] The verb {here{שמע is not merely to hear, but to hear effectually, that is, so as to understand. It has this meaning in other places; see Deuteronomy 38:49; 2 Kings 18:26. The whole verse may be thus rendered, --- 15. Behold, I am bringing upon you a nation from far, O house of Israel, saith Jehovah, --- A nation, strong it is, A nation, from antiquity it is, A nation, thou wilt not know its language, Nor understand what it speaks. The third, fourth, and fifth lines, as well as the first of the next verse, are left out in the Septuagint, but retained by the Vulgate, Syriac, and the Targum. The two first render the word for ``strong,`` ``robustam,`` and the last by ``fortis --- brave.'' Blayney renders it ``strong,`` which is no doubt its meaning. --- Ed.

commonly said, and it is therefore the bond of society. Had there been no language, in what would men differ from brute beasts? One would barbarously treat another; there would indeed be no humanity among them. As then language conciliates men one towards another, the Prophet, in order to terrify the Jews, says that that nation would be barbarous, for there would be no communication made with it by means of a language. Hence it followed that there would be no pity to spare the conquered, no, not if they implored a hundred times; nor could they be heard, who were miserable, and such as might obtain some favor, if they were understood.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that though thou mightest justly condemn us at this day for the gross and wicked impiety, which thou didst formerly condemn by the mouth of thy Prophet in thine ancient people, --- O grant, that we may not proceed in our obstinacy, but learn with pliable minds, and in true docility of heart, to submit to thy word, so that it may not turn to our ruin, but that we may by experience find it to be appointed for our salvation, so that being inflamed with a desire for true religion, and also cleansed from the filth of depraved affections and of carnal lusts, we may devote ourselves wholly to thy service, until having put off the flesh and all its filth, we shall at length attain to that perfect purity, which is set before us in thy gospel, and be made partakers of thy eternal glory in Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Twenty-First

Jeremiah 5:16

16. Their quiver is as an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men.

16. Pharetra ejus tanquam sepulchrum apertum; omnes fortes.

The Prophet had already threatened the Jews with the vengeance of God, and had said that the ministers and executioners of it would be the Chaldeans: he now continues the same subject, and says that their quiver would be like an open sepulcher The nations of the East, we know, made much use of arrows and darts, for they had no pitched battles; but they pretended a flight, and then suddenly turning, they hurled their darts and arrows against their enemies. The Prophet then had a regard to this mode of fighting, when he says that their quivers would be like open sepulchres. It may seem at first sight an unnatural comparison; but it is the same as though he had said, that they would be so skillful in throwing arrows as to destroy all who met them. [145]

And he adds, that they would be all strong, that the people might know that it would not be a slight conflict: in short, it is the same as though he had said, that this war would be a certain ruin to the Jews, in which they should all perish. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 5:17

17. And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword.

[145] The idea intended is capaciousness. The grave is represented as never satisfied, ready to receive any number. See Proverbs 27:20; 30:16; Habakkuk 2:5. The Chaldean quiver would be so large as to contain a vast quantity of arrows, as though it was an open grave. — Ed.

17. Et vorabit messem tuam et panem tuum; vorabunt filios tuos et filias tuas; vorabunt greges tuos et armenta tua; vorabunt vitem tuam et ficum tuam; ad inopiam redigent urbes munitionum tuarum, in quibus tu confidis, per gladium.

He continues to speak in a similar way of the cruelty of their enemies; as though he said that victory was already in their hand, for they were the scourges of God. He does not then set before the Jews the troubles of war, but speaks of them as conquered; and he only shews that the Chaldeans would be cruel in the use they would make of their victory. He takes it as granted that the Chaldeans would be conquerors, for they would come armed from above: and he makes this addition, --- that they would act cruelly and in an unusual manner towards the vanquished Jews.

Hence he says, They will eat (it will eat, for he changes the number, though the sense remains the same [146]) thine harvest and thy bread; that is, all that thou gatherest shall become a prey to thine enemies; for by harvest and bread he means every kind of provision. Then he adds, thy sons and thy daughters, which was still worse; it is indeed hard to be deprived of food, but it is still more dreadful for parents to see their children slain before them. The Prophet however says, that such would be the barbarity of their enemies, that they would not spare even boys and girls. He further mentions herds and flocks; and then he adds the vine and the fig-tree; as though he said, nothing would be safe among the Jews, for their enemies would plunder everything, and that being not content with meat and drink, they would kill their very infants. And further, as the Jews had fortified cities, and were on that account insolent towards the prophets, their vain pride is here brought down; for he says, that their fortified cities would be reduced to poverty; and he adds, in which thou trustest All these, he says, shall fall by the sword; for this last word, {בחרב}, becherab, applies to the whole verse, and to each part of it; as though he had said, ``By the right of the sword shall the conquerors lay waste thy whole country, even all thy possessions; yea, and they shall slay thy sons and thy daughters.'' It follows ---

Jeremiah 5:18

18. Nevertheless in those days, saith the Lord, I will not make a full end with you.

18. Atque etiam in diebus illis dicit Jehova, non faciam vobiscum finem (alii vertunt, consumptionem.)

Different views may be taken as to the meaning of this verse; but the greater part of interpreters think that a hope is here given to the faithful; yea, nearly all are of this opinion; indeed I know not any one who takes another view. They then think that God moderates here what he had previously said, and that he gives some

[146] According to the Hebrew, the verbs, except the second, are all in the singular number. The Septuagint have pluralized them, but the singular is retained by the Vulgate, the Targum, and the Syriac. It is the "nation" described in the 15th verse. The second verb may be rendered in a passive sense, and the meaning will be more appropriate, — And it will devour thy harvest and thy food, Devoured shall be thy sons and thy daughters; It will devour thy sheep and thy ox, It will devour thy wine and thy fig-tree; It will wholly desolate thy fortified cities, In which thou trustest, by the sword. The language used here, and in the 15th verse, is remarkably like that of Moses in Deuteronomy 28:48-52. The second line may be deemed parenthetic. It is better to preserve the poetic singular in sheep, ox, vine, and fig-tree. As it is a reduplicate verb, entire desolation is intended, and that by the "sword" in destroying all the occupants of fortified cities. Venema, and others, as well as Calvin, connect the "sword" with all the preceding clauses; but this is not necessary, nor is it indeed suitable. — Ed.

ground of hope to his servants, lest they should imagine that the Church would be so reduced as to have no seed remaining: and {כלה}, cale, as it was said yesterday, is often taken in this sense. But when I now carefully consider the context, I feel constrained to take another view, even this --- that God here enhances the severity of his vengeance. And the particle {גם}, gam, ``also, ``or even, favors this view; as though he had said, ``Think not that it will be all over when your enemies shall thus plunder you of all your possessions, deprive you of your children, and reduce you to extreme want; for ye shall not by any means be thus freed from all evils, as I shall pursue my vengeance still further.'' There will hereafter follow promises to moderate threatenings, that the hearts of the faithful may not despond: but in this place the Prophet, I have no doubt, introduces God as a Judge, executing vengeance, as though there was no place for mercy.

Then also, he says; for the particle {גם}, gam, is inhansive and emphatic; Then also, in those days; that is, ``When your enemies shall strip your land of its produce, and of all its animals, and of its inhabitants, I shall not even then cease to pursue you: I will not make an end with you, for there will still remain scourges, when ye shall think that rest is given to you, and that the end of evils and of all calamities had come.'' In this manner is God wont to deal with the impenitent; for such is their perverseness, that being smitten they become more and more hardened, and champ the bit, according to the old proverb. And hence is their hardness, because they think that God is, as it were, disarmed when he has punished them for their sins. He therefore declares that he has in his power different kinds of punishment and different ways of punishing. [147] And to the same purpose is what follows ---

Jeremiah 5:19

19. And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doeth the Lord our God all these things unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land, so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours.

19. Et erit quum dixeritis, Quare fecit Jehova Deus noster nobis omnia haec? Tunc dices illis, Sicuti dereliquistis me et serviistis diis alienorum (alieni, ad verbum, sed est enallage numeri) in terra vestra; sic servietis alienis (subaudiunt alii interpretes deos, sed pervertunt sensum Prophetae) in terra non vobis (hoc est, in terra quae non erit vestra.)

It hence appears that what I have said is true, --- that the Prophet did not soften what was severe in the threatenings which we have noticed, but that he treated the Jews according to their perverseness; for he saw that they were untamable; and the Spirit had taught him that such would be their obstinacy, that until they were wholly broken down, they would not bend their necks to receive the yoke. He further assigns the cause here, that they might not contend with God, as hypocrites are wont to do,

[147] See note on Jeremiah 4:27. Even if the design pleaded for by Calvin be admitted, there is no necessity to give the expression a meaning different from what it has in other places, — Yet even in those days, saith Jehovah, I will not make with you a completion, that is, I will not wholly destroy you. It depends on the context what the bearing of this may be, while the sentence itself retains the same meaning. “I will not wholly destroy you, for I intend to preserve a Church for myself,” he might also say, “I will not wholly destroy you, for I have other punishments in reserve for you:“ and the latter, as Calvin maintains, seems to be the purport of the expression in this passage. Still the words themselves have the same meaning. — Ed.

whenever God sharply chastises them; for they murmur against him, and complain and demand reasons why he treats them so severely, as though they were wholly innocent. As, then, hypocrites made such complaints, the Prophet here replies to them.

It shall be, he says, when ye shall say: he addresses the Jews in the person of God. He then immediately turns God's address to himself, Why has Jehovah our God done to us all these things? He ascribes here to hypocrites what is ever in their mouths whenever they are summoned to judgment; for they are so well prepared to contend, as though their cause was the best that could be; and, could God be constrained to render an account, they would prove him guilty of cruelty and of immoderate rigor. We hence see how graphically the Prophet describes refractory men, who will not yield nor acknowledge their fault, but with an iron front rise up against God: and the same thing we find in other passages in the prophets, especially in the first chapter of Malachi; for there the Prophet often repeats the words of the people, ``In what? In what? What means this?'' So also here Jeremiah says, When ye shall say, Why has Jehovah done all these things to us? as though they were innocent: for the reprobate, as though they had washed away all their sins by having wiped their mouths, boldly come forth and demand a reason why God chastises them. So also in this place they hesitate not to call God their God, as though they had not denied God, according to what we have seen yesterday. For so gross an impiety prevailed among them, that they imagined that all things were ruled by chance, and that God unjustly punished them. Though then they had perfidiously forsaken God, yet the Prophet here, in order to expose their petulancy, introduces them here as saying that they regarded God as connected with them.

Then, he says, thou shalt say God one while addresses the people, and at another time the Prophet. When, therefore, they shall begin thus to murmur, then thou mayest reply, Because ye have forsaken me That what was said might have more weight, God would have the Prophet to speak in his name, ``because ye have forsaken me, ``as though Jeremiah did not himself say the words, but God by his mouth; and have served the gods of the alien, that is, of aliens, in your land God shews here briefly what the Jews deserved; and he thought it sufficient to mention one kind of sin only. We shall see elsewhere, as we have often seen, that they were in other respects wicked and guilty before God. But the Prophet observes brevity here, and charges them only with one sort of sin. Ye shall serve tyrants, he says, in a strange land, who shall cruelly oppress you, because ye have served their gods in your own land

God reproves them here for having abused his kindness; for he had expelled the heathen nations from Canaan, and gave that land, which was so pleasant and fruitful, as an inheritance to them, so as to be to them a perpetual rest. God called the land his own rest, because he protected the Jews there, and appointed them as the legitimate heirs of the land even to the end of the world. Hence he says now, your land The reminding them of this kindness was doubtless intended to amplify their guilt; for they possessed the land by the best title, though they had not acquired it themselves.

In your land, he says, ye worshipped gods; he does not say, ``strange gods, ``but ``the gods of the stranger, ``or of strangers. The prophets often speak thus; they call them the gods of the strangers, or of strange people: but the expression is emphatical; for it was very base and less excusable for the Jews, while they had God dwelling among them, to seek gods here and there, and as it were to entreat heathens for gods, and say, ``Give us your gods.'' It was then this base conduct that the Prophet now points out as with the finger, Because ye have served the gods of strangers.

He afterwards adds, Ye shall serve strangers; he does not mean, as I think, strange gods; and it seems to me that those who introduce ``gods'' here, pervert the meaning. [148] He speaks of tyrants, according to what is said elsewhere,

``I had given you my good laws, which if any one keeps he shall live in them; and ye would not obey: I will therefore give you laws which are not good,'' (Ezekiel 20:21, 25:)

that is, ``I will lay on you a tyrannical yoke, and conquerors, and those barbarians whose language shall be unknown to you, shall plunder you and your possessions, because ye have been disobedient and unteachable.'' It follows ---

Jeremiah 5:20-21

20. Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying,

20. Nuntiate hoc in domo Jacob, et promulgate (ad verbum, audire facite) in Jehudah, dicendo,

21. Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not:

21. Audite agedum hoc, populе stulte et absque corde; oculi illis, et non vident; aures illis, et non audiunt (et non audient, ad verbum.)

The Prophet confirms what he had said, lest the Jews should think that they were only terrified by words, and not dread the consequences. Hence he says, Declare this The Prophet, no doubt, alludes to a custom which prevailed; for wars were usually proclaimed by heralds. Enemies did not immediately march forth, but they proclaimed war that the cause might appear just. Hence God here declares, that he had spoken in earnest by the mouth of Jeremiah, as though war had been in the usual manner proclaimed, and armed enemies were already nigh at hand.

Declare ye then this; and what is it? Hear, O foolish people, etc. Here he first reproves the Jews and Israelites for their stupidity, because they were even without common sense; for the heart in Hebrew means the mind or understanding, as we have seen elsewhere. He then says, that this people were destitute of all understanding. He first calls them fatuous or foolish; but as many are slow and heavy and yet not without common sense, he adds that they were a people without heart or understanding. He seems indeed to add by way of correction, that they had eyes

[148] The last clause has been improperly omitted in the Arabic: it is found in the other versions. The word for "strangers" is different from that connected with "gods." They served "the gods of the alien," or, of the heathen: they would have to serve "strangers," or, foreigners, in a land not their own. As they had adopted the religion of heathens, they would have to submit to the dominion and tyranny of heathens: and as they did the former in their own land, they would have to do the latter in a foreign land. Thus their idolatry would expel them from their own country, and subject them to the tyranny of those from whom they derived their idolatry. Thus God often makes the tempters of his people (if they succeed) to be their tormentors. — Ed.

and ears: but his object was ironically to enhance what he had said, and to shew that they were stupid, and no less so than blocks of wood or stones. How so? ``Ye have ears and eyes, ``he says, ``but ye neither see nor hear.'' [149]

He no doubt alludes to the idols to which they had become devoted: for it is said in Psalm 115:8, that those who made idols were like them, as well as those who trusted in them; for it had been previously said, that idols had ears but heard not, and eyes but saw not. Jeremiah then indirectly condemns the Jews here for having become so stupid in their superstitions as to be like dead idols: for there is in an idol some likeness to man; it has various members but no understanding. So also he says, the Jews had eyes and ears and the external form of men; but they were at the same time no less stupid than if they were stones or blocks of wood. Now follows the proclamation ---

Jeremiah 5:22

22. Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?

22. An me non timebitis, dicit Jehova? an a facie mea non contremiscetis? Qui posui arenam terminum mari, statutum seculi aeternum, et non praeteribit illud (vel, terminum illud; quidam enim ad proximum referunt, alii ad prius,) et movebunt se et non praevalebunt, et tumultuabuntur (vel, resonabunt) fluctus ejus (istud {גליו} extendunt ad duo verba,) et non transgredientur ipsum (non transilient, est idem verbum quod paulo ante usurpavit.)

God shews here why he had said that the people were foolish and without understanding. It was indeed a monstrous stupidity, not to fear at the presence of God, since even inanimate elements obey his bidding: and he takes the sea especially as an example; for there is nothing more terrific than a tempestuous sea. It appears as if it would overwhelm the whole world, when its waves swell with so much violence. No one can in this case do otherwise than tremble. But the sea itself, which makes the stoutest to tremble, quietly obeys God; for however furious may be its tossings, they are yet under restraint. Now, if any inquires how this is, it must be confessed to be a miracle which cannot be accounted for; for the sea, we know, as other elements, is spherical. As the earth is round, so also is the element of water, as well as the air and fire. Since then the form of this element is spherical, we must know that it is not lower than the earth: but it being lighter than the earth shews that it stands above it. How then comes it that the sea does not overflow the whole earth? for it is a liquid, and cannot stand in one place, except retained by some secret power of God. It hence follows, that the sea is confined to its own place, because of God's

[149] It is better to retain the future tense, as their obstinacy is thereby more fully expressed; the whole verse may be thus literally rendered, — Hear, I pray, this, Ye perverse people and without understanding, — Eyes they have, but they will not see, Ears they have, but they will not hear. The “this” which they were to hear is contained in the next verse. The two last lines are only explanatory of the preceding. They were “without understanding,“ for they would not see, though they had eyes; and they were “perverse,“ or perversely foolish, for they would not hear, though they had ears. When two things are mentioned and afterwards referred to, the prophets usually explain the last, and then the first, as the case is here. The two last lines may be included in a parenthesis. — Ed.

appointment, according to what is said by Moses,

``Let the dry land,'' said God, ``appear,'' (Genesis 1:9:)

for he intimates that the earth was covered with water, and no part of it appeared, until God formed the sea. Now the word of God, though it is not heard by us, nor resounds in the air, is yet heard by the sea; for the sea is confined within its own limits. Were the sea tranquil, it would still be a wonderful work of God, as he has given the earth to be the habitation of men: but when it is moved, as I have said, by a tempest, and heaven and earth seem to blend together, there is no one, being nigh such a sight, who does not feel dread. Hence then the power of God, and his dread might, appear more evident when he calms the turbulent sea.

We now see the scope of the Prophet's words: He shews that the Jews were monsters, and unworthy not only to be counted men, but even to be classed with brute animals; for there was more sense and understanding in the tempestuous and raging sea than in men, who seemed endued with reason and understanding. This is the design of the comparison.

But as it was a heavy complaint, the Prophet asks a question, Will ye not fear me? As though God had said, ``What do you mean? How is it that I am not feared by you? The sea obeys me, and its fury is checked by my secret bidding; for I have once for all commanded the sea to remain within its own limits, and though it may be violently agitated by storms and tempests, it does not yet exceed my orders. Will not you men, endowed with reason, fear me? will you not tremble at my presence?'' And he says, that he had set the sand to be the boundary of the sea: and this is much more expressive than if he had said that he had set boundaries to the sea; for the sand is movable and driven by a small breath of wind, and the sand is also penetrable. Were there rocks along all the shores of the sea, it would not be so wonderful. Had God then restrained the violence of the sea by firm and strong mounds, the keeping of it within its limits might be ascribed to nature; but what firmness is there in sand? for a little water thrown on it will soon penetrate through it. How then is it, that the sea, when tossed by violent storms, does not remove the sand, which is so easily shifted? We hence see that this word is not in vain introduced. And there is a similar passage in Job 38:11, where God, speaking of his infinite power, says among other things,

``Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further:''

for doubtless no storm arises, except when it pleases God. He might indeed keep the sea in the same quiet state; but he does not do so: on the contrary, he gives it as it were loose reins, but he says, ``Hitherto shall it come.'' When therefore high mountains seem to threaten all mortals, and the earth seems nigh an overthrow, then suddenly the impetuous waves are repressed and become calm.

And he adds, A perpetual ordinance It is indeed true that the sea sometimes overflows its limits; for many cities, we know, have been swallowed up by a flood; but still it is rightly said, that it is a perpetual ordinance or decree, that God confines the sea within its own limits. For whenever the sea overflows a small portion of land, we hence learn what it might do without that restraint, mentioned here by Jeremiah and in the book of Job. We hence learn, that there is nothing to hinder the sea

from overflowing the whole earth, but the command of God which it obeys. In the mean time the perpetuity of which the Prophet speaks remains generally the same: for though many storms arise every year, yet the fury of the sea is still quieted, but not otherwise than by the command of God. True then is this --- that the sea has prescribed limits, over which its waves are not permitted to pass. And hence he says, Move themselves and not prevail shall its waves; and again, Resound, or tumultuate shall they, and shall not pass over [150]

We now apprehend the design of this verse: God complains, that there was so much madness and stupidity in the people, that they did not obey him as much as the sea, even the stormy sea. He then condemns here the Jews, as though they were monsters; for nothing can be more contrary to nature than for the tempestuous sea to have more understanding than man, created in God's image and endued with reason. He then adds ---

Jeremiah 5:23

23. But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.

23. Atqui populo huic fuit cor perversum et rebelle; deflexerunt et abierunt

Here the previous verse is completed; for what is said here is connected with the question which we have noticed. But God now proves more clearly why he adduced what he said of the sea. The copulative {ו}, vau, is to be taken here as an adversative, and to be thus rendered, But this people have a perverse heart: for {סורר}, surer, means ``perverse;'' some render it ``revolting, ``but improperly; for it appears from many other passages that it is something more: besides, the other meaning is more suitable to the context here; for he says first, that the people had a perverse heart; [151] and then, that they had a rebellious or an untamable heart. He no doubt compares the obstinacy with the obedience of the sea, or sets one in contrast with the other, and conveys simply this truth, that there was more fury and stupidity in that people than in the raging sea.

And he proves that the people had a perverse heart by the effect; for they had fallen away and departed Had he said only that they had fallen away, the proof would not have been so complete; but by adding ``departed, ``he points out their

[150] The reference seems to be to the decree or ordinance, and not to the boundary: therefore "transgress" is the most suitable word. I would render the verse thus, — 22. Should you not fear me? saith Jehovah; Ought you not at my presence to tremble? Who have set the sand a boundary to the sea. — An ordinance perpetual, and it transgresses it not; Though toss themselves and prevail not, and roar do its waves, Yet it does not transgress it. The future tense in Hebrew may be often rendered subjunctively or potentially, and especially in questions. The non-transgressor is the sea — the non-transgressor of the decree, notwithstanding the tumult of its waves. "An ordinance perpetual" is rendered "{πρόσταγμα} {αἰώνιον} --- an everlasting command,'' by the Septuagint, --- ``praeceptum sempiternum --- a sempiternal precept,`` by the Vulgate and the Targum, --- and ``lege perpetua --- by a perpetual law,`` by the Syriac. A perpetual ordinance is the version of Blayney. --- Ed.

[151] It is true that the idea of perverseness is conveyed by this word; but it means one bent on turning away from God. To turn away, or to apostatize, is its primary meaning, as in the latter clause of this verse; but here it is a participle in a reduplicate form, which has ever an expansive meaning. It means here either a heart continually turning away from God, or a heart resolutely determined to turn away from him. The last seems to be the meaning, as it appears to correspond with the next line, — But in this people has been a heart, Thoroughly revolting and disobedient; They have revolted and gone away. When they turned away from God or revolted, they were remonstrated with and exhorted to return; but they disobeyed; hence their thorough revolt and their going away. — Ed.

obstinacy; as though he had said, that their corruption was permanent, like settled diseases, which can be healed by no remedies. They have then fallen away and departed; that is, ``I could not bring them back.'' God had indeed often tried by his servants to restore them to a right course; but their perverseness only discovered itself more and more, and shewed itself to be irreclaimable; for they departed, so that there was no prospect of repentance. It follows ---

Jeremiah 5:24

24. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

24. Et non dixerunt in corde suo, Timeamus agedum Jehovam, Deum nostrum, qui dat pluviam et imbrem matutinum et serotinum (diximus de his verbis alibi) tempore suo; hebdomadas perpetuas messis (hoc est, ad messem) custodit nobis.

The Prophet in other words proves here that the Jews had been justly charged with perverseness: he says, that it did not come to their minds, that they did not think, to fear God. We hence see that all that is said is designed to shew, that the people were no less senseless and stupid, than if they were lifeless elements; nay, that there was more stupidity and more furious madness in their hearts than in any created thing.

To say in the heart means in Hebrew to weigh, to consider. We should say in Latin, ``It did not come to their minds,'' (non venit illis in mentem;) that is, ``Have they not been so void of common sense, that this thought did not come to their minds, or did not occur to them, Let us fear the Lord?'' And here he takes away every pretense of ignorance, that they might not object and say, that they did not worship God through error or want of knowledge: ``But ye had eyes,'' he says, and ye had ears, and all the faculties belonging to men; God gave you rain; there has been no year in which the earth did not bring forth its fruit for you; when ye eat bread, does not the bounty of God occur to your minds? and yet ye consider not that he ought to be worshipped.'' We hence see that he takes away every excuse for their ingratitude by saying, that they had been inattentive to those blessings, which were seen by the eyes, and felt by the hands, and touched by every part of the body. But of the rest we must speak to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou daily invitest us to thyself with so much kindness and benevolence, and since thy word continually sounds in our ears, --- O grant, that we may not become deaf through the depravity of our flesh, but be attentive to hear the doctrine of salvation, and become so teachable and obedient, that we may be willing to be turned wherever thou pleasest, and to be guided in the way thou pointest out to us, until we shall at length reach that blessed rest, which has been prepared for us in heaven by Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Twenty-Second

Yesterday was exhibited the senselessness of those who were not induced by God's blessings to serve him. The Prophet indeed mentioned the benefits which God usually bestows on the good and the bad without distinction, --- that he gives rain

and spring and autumn, and so regulates all the year as to ripen all the fruit; for by the appointed weeks he only means, that God so arranges the different parts of the year, that what men sow comes to maturity; and the word reserve, or keep, is intended to shew the same thing. For it is the same as though he had said, ``The seasons through the whole year are so changed, that there is a regular succession of suitable weather preserved.''

We now then understand the Prophet's object: He shews that the Jews had been extremely thoughtless; for they did not regard the paternal favor of God as to their daily food, so as to be thereby moved to worship and serve Him. Paul, also, when addressing heathens, adduced this reason,

``God,'' he says, ``never left himself {ἀμάρτυρον}, without a testimony; for he gave rain and fruitful seasons,''
(Acts 14:17)

that is, he so arranged the seasons, that the care he takes of mankind may be thus seen as in a mirror. But it was the Prophet's object here to condemn the Jews for their ingratitude, because they did not consider how bountifully God had ever dealt with them and beyond what was common. For he had not only in an ordinary way allured them to himself by his benefits; but his object had been to attach them to himself by singular and unusual means. Since then he had shewn to them singular favors, the more base was their ingratitude; for they did not consider, that the many benefits which God conferred on them, were so many motives or allurements, by which he bound them as it were to himself.

We now then see the Prophet's meaning, when he says, They have not said, ``Let us fear Jehovah, who gives us rain; that is, the vernal rain and the rain that precedes the harvest, and that also in its season For hence God's providence shines forth, because the rain follows when the husbandmen have sown; and it supplies the earth with moisture; and then before the fruit ripens, God renders it plump by latter rain. And for the same purpose is added this, Who reserves the appointed weeks, (literally, the weeks of ordinances;) and he says, that they are the weeks of the harvest [152] It now follows ---

Jeremiah 5:25

25. Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.

25. Iniquitates vestrae averterunt haec, et scelera vestra prohibuerunt bonum a vobis.

Inasmuch as hypocrites, according to what has been said before, often reply to God, and bring this and that objection, the Prophet here checks what they might have alleged; for he says that God's beneficence had been restrained by them, and that it was indeed their fault that it did not flow to them. For they might have thus objected, ``Thou indeed preachest well respecting God's paternal bounty, because

[152] Blayney, following the Septuagint and the Vulgate, has rendered the latter clause thus, — A sufficiency of the appointed things of harvest he secureth to us. But the Targum agrees with our version; and Gataker, Grotius, Venema, and others, take the same view, which is more expressive and more accordant with the passage, — The weeks, the appointed seasons of harvest, He preserves for us. The word {,{חקות means what is established, fixed, ordained, or appointed, as to time, place, course, portion, or law; and it is here, not in regimine, but in apposition with ``weeks.'' --- Ed

he supplies us with food; but the heat at one time burns our corn, the unseasonable rains at another time destroy our provisions: in a word, there is nothing certain, but all things are in a state of disorder.'' That he might therefore obviate this objection, he says, that it was on account of their wickedness and depravity, that God did not so regulate every part of the year as to allow them to see with their eyes his continued bounty.

This passage is worthy of special notice: for God's paternal favor does not so continually shine forth in our daily sustenance, but that many clouds intercept our view. Hence it is, that ungodly men think that the years are now barren and then fruitful through mere chance. We indeed see nothing so regulated in every respect in the world, that the goodness of God can be seen without clouds and obstructions: but we do not consider whence this confusion proceeds, even because we obstruct God's access to us, so that his beneficence does not reach us. We throw heaven and earth into confusion by our sins. For were we in right order as to our obedience to God, doubtless all the elements would be conformable, and we should thus observe in the world an angelic harmony. But as our lusts tumultuate against God; nay, as we stir up war daily, and provoke him by our pride, perverseness, and obstinacy, it must needs be, that all things, above and below, should be in disorder, that the heavens should at one time appear cloudy, and that continuous rains should at another time destroy the produce of the earth, and that nothing should be unmixed and unstained in the world. This confusion then, in all the elements, is to be ascribed to our sins: and this is what is meant by the Prophet. Though indeed the reproof was then addressed to the Jews, we may yet gather hence a lesson of general instruction.

These two things are then both true, --- that God is not without a testimony as to his beneficence, for he gives rain, he gives suitable seasons, he renders the earth fruitful, so as to supply us with food, --- and also, that heaven and earth are often in great disorder, that many things happen unseasonably, as though God had no care for us, because we provoke him by our sins, and thus confound and subvert the order of nature. These two things then ought to be viewed as connected together: for in the ordinary course of nature we may see the inconceivable bounty of God towards mankind; but as to accidental evils, the cause ought to be considered, even this --- because we do not allow God to govern the world in a regular and consistent order, but as far as we can we disturb and confound his providence. We hence see how suitably the Prophet has added this truth --- that the iniquities of the people had turned away the beneficence of God. [153] It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 5:26

26. For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men.

26. Quia inventi sunt (aut, inveniuntur) in populo meo scelerati; aspicient (hoc est, astute observabunt) secundum ponere laqueos (hoc est, ac si decipulas tenderent;)

[153] There is a correspondence between the terms here used, and those in the last verse. Their iniquities had turned aside, or diverted from their right course, the appointed seasons; and their sins had restrained the good, the seasonable rain which had been given them. As it is commonly the case in the prophets, the last thing mentioned in the previous verse, is the first thing referred to here, and then what is antecedently mentioned. — Ed.

perditionem locant, in qua homines capiant.

What the previous verse contains is here confirmed, --- that the Jews, through their own fault, had deprived themselves of God's favor. It was necessary to do this; for otherwise they would have had some answer to give, inasmuch as hypocrites, being so perverse, do not easily yield. Hence the Prophet confirms what he had said, --- that there were wicked men among God's people. But this ought not to be confined to some among them, as it is done by interpreters, who seem not to explain quite correctly what the Prophet meant. For he does not reprove or condemn some only; but he says that the people, whom God had chosen, were wicked It is then a general condemnation of the whole people, when he says, that there were found wicked men among God's people; as though he had said, ``The wicked are not to be sought among heathens, but iniquity so reigns among the elect people, that there is in them nothing sound, nothing pure.''

When he says found, I understand his meaning to be, found guilty, or convicted: for he means that their sins were not secret, so that they could escape by evasions; but he says that they were found, as thieves are found, according to a common saying, in the very act of stealing. The Prophet then intimates that there was no need of long dispute, as though the Jews could find out some excuse, for they were manifestly guilty. But it was much more disgraceful that they should be found wicked, than that the blind and unbelieving should be found so; for God had adopted them as his people on this condition --- that holiness and purity of life should prevail among them. Since then they were not only sinners, but {רשעים}, reshoim, wholly impious and wicked, it was, as I have said, a far more atrocious thing. And thus he takes away from them every pretense for evasion.

He afterwards urges still farther his charge, and says, that every one looked, or espied, for this is the meaning of the verb {שור}, shur. He indeed changes the number, but the sense is not rendered thereby more obscure: and to look here, is to lie in wait. Then look, or lie in wait, did every one, as though they were laying snares as fowlers do. He then says, that they were furnished with snares, by which they dragged men into destruction, after having caught them. [154] What is particular is here mentioned for what is general: for the Prophet meant to shew that there was then no faithfulness nor integrity among the people, for every one by frauds and wicked crafts oppressed the simple. Since then they were so perfidious one towards another, he fitly compares them to fowlers, who by their snares entrap the simple birds: but he explains this more clearly in what follows ---

Jeremiah 5:27

27. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are

[154] There is a grammatical difficulty connected with the word {ישור} The Septuagint, and the Syriac and the Arabic, omit the word, and the Vulgate renders it in the plural number, as if it was {ישורו}, which Blayney adopts. Venema renders it ``upright'' or just, and considers the root to be and{ישר} refers to Micah 7:4, when the upright is said to be ``sharper than a thorn hedge,`` that is, such as were counted or ought to have been ``upright.'' The reference here is evidently to the judge, who assumed the office of an upright one. See verse 28. The literal version would then be as follows, --- For found among my people are the unjust; The upright is like the setter of snares; They have set up entrapping, Men they catch. Thus all the parts correspond, and what is said corresponds with Jeremiah 5:28. The verb rendered ``set up, ``means to settle, to constitute, to establish; the office of the upright, that is, of the judge, was set up as an office for entrapping, he being like a setter of snares. The ``unjust'' among the people, as stated here, were the judges; the word, is{רשע} the perverter of justice, and stands in contrast with {צדק}, who acts justly. --- Ed

become great, and waxen rich.

27. Sicuti cavea plena est ave (hoc est, avibus,) sic domus eorum plenae sunt fraude: propterea aucti sunt et ditati.

Jeremiah goes on with the same subject. He made use, as we have said, of a similitude taken from fowling: he now applies this similitude to the Jews, --- that their houses were full of fraud, as the cage (some render it basket [155]) is full of birds: for fowlers, when they go for game, carry with them either bags or cages or baskets. So then Jeremiah says, that they collected plunder on every side, so that their houses were full of frauds: but by fraud he means spoils, which they acquired by unjust means. It may at the first view seem an obscure language; but if we take the word {מרמה}, mereme, in a passive sense, there will be nothing ambiguous. The Prophet then does not use a language strictly correct when he says, that their houses were full of deceit or fraud; but they were full of spoils which they had acquired by deceit and fraud. Hence, what he means by fraud were the plunders by which they had become rich, as he afterwards explains.

We now perceive, that the meaning of the Prophet is, --- that there was no longer a proof required, that the Jews circumvented the helpless and the poor, for their houses were filled with such spoils as made evident their wickedness: they had scraped together their riches by depriving the helpless and the poor of their substance. And hence he adds, By this have they increased and become rich It is probable that they gloried in their wealth, like thieves, whose trade is to plunder: for when they increased, they thought themselves raised above all danger. They were like courtiers, who by rapines and frauds and tyrannical violence, draw to themselves from all quarters the possessions of others, so that one got annually sixty thousands and another a hundred thousands; and then they became the more ferocious, because they thought that they could not be called to an account, being blinded by the splendor of their riches. But the Prophet here derides this besotted glorying, and says, ``Behold, they are become great in the world, and they would have themselves to be on this account exalted;'' increased have they, he says, and become rich; that is, ``If any one will now search their houses, he will indeed find many things by which they make a display before the eyes of the simple; but they are nothing but rapines, plunders, frauds, spoils, thefts, and, in a word, robberies.'' This is what he simply means. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 5:28

28. They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.

28. Impinguati sunt (nam {שמנו} deducitur ab oleo, perfusi sunt pinguedine, si Latine et proprie reddere velimus,) postea nitent (vel, sunt candidi, alludit ad pingues et

[155] It is so rendered in Amos 8:1, 2. This was no doubt a wicker-basket or cage for birds, to keep them, and not a trap-cage, as suggested by the Septuagint and Vulgate versions. The Targum is, "the house of feeding." The comparison is between a cage full of birds, which had been caught by snares, nets, or traps, and houses filled with spoils, which had been procured by frauds. And were "full" rendered "filled, "as it might be, there would be no need of the metonymy supposed to be in the word "fraud," — As the cage is filled with birds, So their houses are filled by means of fraud: Hence they have become great and grown rich. — Ed.

bene saginatos, quorum cutis est nitida;) etiam excedunt (vel, quamvis excesserint) verba impii (hoc est, scelera impiorum:) causam non judicant, causam pupilli, et prosperantur; et judicium pauperum non judicant.

Here the Prophet reproves those who were high in dignity, station, and wealth, and who wished at the same time to be deemed inviolable, because they were the rulers of the people. He had spoken before generally, but now he assails the higher orders, the king's counselors, the priests, the judges, and all endowed with authority. He says, that they were swoln with fatness, that they were shining, though they had exceeded, etc We see how he confirms what he had briefly referred to; for as they protected themselves under the pretense of being rich, that they might not be called to an account, he says, by way of concession, ``I allow that ye are bright and splendid, and indeed that ye are all over gold; but whence is this splendor? whence is this specious appearance, which dazzles the eyes of the simple? Ye are bright, ye are fat, though ye have surpassed the words of the impious, that is, the ways, the doings, and the designs of the impious.'' He means, in short, that it was of no avail to the wicked, that by their aspect they terrified people, that they gained great respect by their riches, and made men afraid of them: the Prophet admits that they had honors, wealth, splendor, repute, dignity, and such things; but he says, at the same time, Ye have surpassed all the doings of the wicked [156] And then he brings this charge against them, that they did not judge judgment

It hence appears that the Prophet was not dealing with the common people nor with private individuals; but that he openly and avowedly reproved the king's court and the judges. ``They judge not judgment, ``he says; which means, that they had no care for executing justice, but suffered thefts and robberies to go unpunished: and he still enhances their guilt and says, They judge not the judgment of the fatherless Pity towards young orphans is often found in those who are otherwise cruel; for that age, especially when deprived of all protection, touches our feelings in a peculiar manner. Since then young orphans were plundered with impunity, and found no defense from the judges, their dishonesty appeared most glaringly.

And he says, that they yet prospered. He again repeats, by way of concession, what he had before intimated, --- that it was a foolish and vain pretense, that they openly boasted of their wealth, honors, and fortunes. How is this, he says? They prosper; but yet they judge not the judgment of the poor, that is, they help not the

[156] Expounders differ as to the meaning of these words. They are partly omitted by the Septuagint and Syriac. The Vulgate is, “et praeterierunt sermones meos pessime — and they have passed by my words very haughtily.” The Targum is a loose version, “They have also transgressed the words of the law, they have done what is evil.” Such meanings do not correspond with the context. The words literally are, “They have passed over (or, by) the words of wrong;” but as the term for “words” often means things, affairs, matters, the version may be, “matters of wrong,“ or wrong things. These “matters of wrong” are afterwards specified, as will be seen in the following version, — 28. They have become fat, they have shined: Moreover, they have passed by matters of wrong; The cause they have not defended — The cause of the orphan, yet have they prospered; And the right of the meek have they not pleaded. The word “moreover,“ may be rendered “though,“ as Blayney does, (see Nehemiah 6:1:) but the rest of the sentence is not so well rendered, — Though they have gone beyond the claims of the wicked. He conceived that the meaning is, that they granted to the wicked man more than he claimed, while they denied justice to the orphan and the poor. But what is more accordant with the words is, that he states here what he afterward specifies. It is not properly the “poor” who are meant, but the quiet, the humble: for the poor, strictly speaking, had not much to lose; hence the judges were not bribed to allow them to become a prey to dishonest men. — Ed.

poor, but dissemble and connive at all the wrongs done to them. We now then see that he exposes to view the wickedness of the people, so that not even the principal men should be able to hide themselves; for the Lord shews that they had wholly neglected their duties, and were even destitute of all humanity. It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 5:29

29. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

29. An super hoc non visitabo dicit Jehova? an in gente quae talis est, non se ulciscetur anima mea?

He repeats what we have before noticed, so there is no need of an explanation. But the repetition is not without its use; for the Jews had become so torpid, that all reproofs and threatenings were regarded with indifference. Hence God rouses them with great vehemence, Shall I not, he says, visit for these things? He takes it for granted, that we ought to be fully persuaded, that he is the judge of the world. It is the proper office of a judge to punish the wicked, and also to relieve the helpless and the oppressed, and to check the audacity of those who allow themselves every liberty. God then reasons here from his own nature and office, as though he had said, ``Since I am God, can I suffer so much impiety and wantonness to prevail unpunished among my people?'' Then he adds ---

On such a nation as this, shall not avenged be my soul?

God transfers here to himself, as we have said elsewhere, what does not strictly belong to him; but it is the same as though he had said, ``There is no one among earthly judges so void of feeling as to bear such indignities; for when the judge sees that he is treated with contempt by the wicked, is he not provoked?'' Avenged then shall be my soul; as though he said, that he is not so soft, or so slothful, or so careless, as not to take vengeance on such wanton contempt. It follows ---

Jeremiah 5:30-31

30. A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land;

30. Stupor (vel, res stupenda) et foeditas in terra (vel, res pudenda; {שער}, unde nomen deductum est, significat proprie cogitare vel reputare; sed videtur per antiphrasin Deus hoc loco, ut aliis quibusdam, notare rem prodigiosam, quae non cadit sub sensum humanum, quasi diceret hoc non posse concipi neque apprehendi hominis mente; scio hoc posse videri novum, sed tamen subest optima ratio, ut mihi videtur. Postea addit.)

31. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

31. Prophetae prophetant in mendacio, et sacerdotes dominantur per manum ipsorum (vel, accipiunt in manus suas,) et populus meus voluit ita (hoc est, ita vult et appetit:) et quid facietis in novissimo ejus?

The Prophet, being not satisfied with the reproof which we have observed, speaks still more strongly against the wickedness of the people. He then says, that so deplorable was their state as to make all to feel amazed. A stupendous thing, he says, has happened, which exceeds all human conception, and cannot be comprehended.

By the two words he uses, he intimates that the impiety of the people could not be expressed in words or could not be conceived by the mind; for it was a monstrous thing. This is the meaning. [157]

Let us now see what was this monstrous thing which the Prophet here refers to, and which he abhorred. The prophets, he says, prophesy falsely It was no doubt enough to make all astonished, when these impostors assumed the name of prophets at Jerusalem, where God had chosen his habitation and his sanctuary: how great and how base a profanation was it of God's name? There were indeed at that time impostors everywhere, who boasted that they were God's prophets, who in many places passed as oracles the delusions of Satan; but to see the ministers of the devil in the very sanctuary of God, (which was then the only one in the world,) even in the very city where he had, as it has been said, his habitation and dwelling, was a monstrous thing, which ought to have made all men astonished. It is indeed a detestable thing under the Papacy, when monks and similar unprincipled men ascend the pulpit, and there most shamefully pretend that they are the true prophets of God, and faithful teachers; but still it would be doubly monstrous, were any among us to corrupt pure doctrine with their errors and infect the people with their superstitions. It was not then without reason that Jeremiah introduced his subject by saying, that it was an astonishing thing and hardly to be conceived, when prophets prophesied falsely

He then adds, Priests receive into their hands; so some render the words: but there may be a twofold meaning. Sampson is said in Judges 14:9, to have received into his hands honey from the lion, and the same verb is found there: but as it means also to rule, to govern, the exposition most suitable to this place is, --- that the priests ruled by the means of the false prophets. At the same time, if any one takes the other view, --- that the priests received into their hands, that is, that they gathered and accumulated gifts from all quarters, the meaning would not be unsuitable. [158]

However this may be, the Prophet evidently shews that there was a mutual collusion between the false prophets and the priests. The false prophets, he says, deceive the people by their flatteries, and what do the priests? It was their duty to oppose them: they receive, he says, into their hands; that is, they are satisfied, for they see that these fallacies bring gain to them, and therefore they easily assent to what is taught by the false prophets. The same thing is to be seen at this day under the Papacy: the monks flatter the people and prop up the whole system of Popery; and

[157] The words literally are, — Amazement and horribleness has been done in the land. That is, what occasioned both had been done, or what ought to have filled all with the feeling of amazement and horror. — Ed.

[158] The Septuagint and the Vulgate have, “And the priests have applauded with their own hands;” and the Targum, “And the priests have helped their hands.” Both mean the same thing, though the words are different: and Blayney gives the same meaning, “And the priests have concurred with them.” Horsley says that the words literally are, “And the priests go down according to their hands;” that is, he adds, “the priests go which way their bands permit; i.e., the priests are directed by them.” Though the points lead us to regard {as{ידו future from ,{רדה} to bear rule; yet the context requires it to be in the past tense, as the previous verb is so, and that which follows: and therefore it must be ,{ירד} to come down, to descend. When followed by ,{על} as here, the preposition never means ``according to,`` as Horsley renders it, but ever, upon, toward or against, and mostly ``upon.'' See Exodus 9:19; Numbers 11:9; Psalm 7:16; Psalm 72:6. Therefore the literal rendering is this, --- And the priests have descended upon their hands. An idiomatic expression, which seems to mean, that the priests assisted the prophets, according to what is expressed by the Targum. ``Hand'' signify labor, efforts; the priests joined their efforts to those of the prophets. To ``concur with them'' is too feeble: the line may be rendered, --- And the priests have aided them. --- Ed.

hence these unprincipled men call themselves the chariots of the Pope; for the Pope is carried as it were on four wheels --- the four mendicant orders. And this they boast, when they wish to shew what adepts they are in lying. The Pope then is carried by the four wheels of the mendicants. We see how he has honored and daily honors these mendicants with privileges, and why? Because they prop up his tyranny. Such was at that time the state of the people; the priests took their prey, and the false prophets snatched also a part of it, like these hungry dogs at this day; who yet do not act so oppressively as the Pope: they lick as it were his seat, like dogs; while he and his mitered bishops devour the fattest spoils. The meaning then, that they received into their hands, is not unsuitable.

But when we consider the main drift of the passage, it is more in harmony with it to say, that the priests ruled by their means; for without the false prophets they could not have retained their influence over the people; they must have been repudiated by them all. Since then they ruled by their means, there was a mutual collusion between them.

He then adds, And my people have wished it to be so The common people, no doubt, exculpated themselves, as they do at this day, who hold forth this excuse as their shield, ``O, we are not learned, we have never been in school, and what can we do but to follow our bishops?'' Thus, then, at this day, the lower orders, the multitude, seek to cast off every blame from themselves. But the Prophet says here, that the people loved to have things so. And, doubtless, we shall find that to be ever true which is said in Deuteronomy 13:3, that when false prophets come, it is for the purpose of trying God's people, whether they from the heart love God. It is then his object to try our religion, whenever he gives loose reins to impostors and false prophets: for every one who truly loves God will be preserved by his Spirit from being led away by such deceivers. When, therefore, ignorant men are deluded, it is certain that they are justly punished for their neglect and contempt of God, because they have not been sufficiently attentive to his service; yea, because they have wished for impostors, according to what has been also often said by the monks, ``The world wishes to be deceived, let it be deceived in the name of the devil.'' These impostors have become so shameless, as to boast that they are the ministers of Satan to deceive men. However, that common saying has been found true; for the world is never deceived except with its own consent, and willingly; for those who are the most ignorant close their eyes against clear light, and shun God as much as they can, and seek to hide themselves in darkness, according to what Christ says,

``Whosoever committeth sin hateth the light.'' (John 3:20)

The Prophet adds in the last place, And what will ye do at last, or at the end of it? Some omit the pronoun {הּ}, he; and others apply it to the false prophets and the priests; but the Prophet, I have no doubt, refers to Jerusalem, What will ye do at the end of it? For we know that as Jerusalem had been founded by God's hand, and while it had him as its protector and guardian, it was safe; but this was a false confidence, when they despised God and gloried in their wickedness. What, then, he says, will ye do at the end of it? as though he had said, ``You deceive yourselves, if you think that this city will be perpetual; for its overthrow is nigh at hand: what

then will ye do, when the city itself shall bc destroyed, except that you shall be all destroyed together with it?'' [159]

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that since we have been hitherto extremely deaf to thy many exhortations, and also to those threatenings by which thou hast sharply stimulated us to repentance, --- O grant, that this perverseness may not always remain in us, but that we may at length submit to thee, not only for a short time, but continually, so that we may to the end devote ourselves wholly to thee, and thus glorify thy name, that we may at last become partakers of that glory, which has been procured for us by the blood of thy only --- begotten Son. --- Amen.

[159] The "it" refers rather to the "strange and horrible thing" which had been done in the land, — But what will ye do at the end of it? That is, when this dreadful thing shall come to an end, when the prophets, encouraged by the priests and approved by the people, shall be found liars, what then shall you do? The Septuagint render the last words by "{μετὰ} {ταῦτα} --- after these things,`` referring evidently to the particulars just mentioned, the acts of the prophets, priests, and people: but the same thing is meant. Then in the next chapter he reminds them of the approaching destruction, which the false prophets denied. --- Ed

Chapter 6

CHAPTER 6

Lecture Twenty-Third

Jeremiah 6:1

1. O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Bethhaccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction.

1. Congregamini filii Benjamin e medio Jerusalem, et in Thekua clangite tuba, et Bethhacherem tollite signum; quia malum visum est ab Aquilone et afflictio magna.

WE have already seen that oftentimes punishment is not only mentioned by this Prophet as being nigh at hand, but is also set as it were before our eyes; and we have shewn the reason for this, --- because men are not only deaf, but wholly thoughtless, whenever God threatens them. As reproofs make no impressions, and even threatenings are not sufficient to arouse and awake them, it is necessary to set before them vivid descriptions, and to represent the event as present. Jeremiah continues this mode of teaching; he addresses the tribe of Benjamin; for one half of Jerusalem was in the territory of that tribe; And as he was from Anathoth, he addresses his own people and kindred rather than others, as he could use greater freedom. Had he directly reproved the Jews, they might not have so well borne with him; but as he begins with his neighbors, the tribe of Benjamin, it became more easy to bear his reproofs.

Some understand the words, ``Be ye assembled, and flee;'' others read, ``Go ye in haste, ``but for what reason I know not. I do not think that flight is meant here; but I rather regard the Prophet as ironically encouraging the citizens of Jerusalem and their neighbors to go forth, as it is usual, to meet their enemies; and this we may easily learn from the context: Be ye assembled, he says, from the midst of Jerusalem; that is, Be aroused and go forth. And he indirectly condemns their indulgences, for they had been lying as it were in the bosom of their mother. Like infants in the womb,

the Jews were not apprehensive of any danger; they indulged themselves, and were wholly secure and thoughtless. Hence he says, ``From the midst of Jerusalem be ye assembled.'' [160]

Then he says, Blow ye the trumpet in Tekoa. They were wont, no doubt, when any danger was at hand, to blow the trumpet in that town; and then the citizens of Jerusalem went forth in large bodies to resist their enemies: for the Prophet follows the usual custom, and speaks as of things well known. And set up a sign on the house of Haccerem, {הכרם}. No doubt this place was so called, because many forces were planted there. It means literally the house of the vineyard. It is, indeed, a proper name; but its etymology ought to be borne in mind; for as vines were usually planted on hills, it is probable that this place stood high; and a sign might have been thence given to many around. He therefore says, ``Set up a sign, {משאת}, meshat, a word derived from {נשא}, nesha, which is also found here: but some interpreters render it ``fire'' or bonfire; others ``banner;'' and others ``tower.'' They who render it tower or citadel have no reason in their favor; for towers could not have been suddenly raised up. But it is probable, as I have already said, that thence a sign was given to those around, as from a watch --- tower, whenever there was any cause of fear. I am therefore inclined to take the word as meaning a sign; for the word ``banner'' would have been too restricted. Literally it is, ``Elevate an elevation.'' The word ``sign, ``then, is the most suitable. [161]

For an evil, he says, from the north has appeared [162] The Prophet points out whence ruin would soon come, even from the Chaldeans, for God had appointed them as the ministers and the executioners of his vengeance in destroying Jerusalem and the whole tribe of Judah. We hence see what the Prophet means: he ridicules the Jews, who were asleep in their vices, promising to themselves impunity, and despising all the judgments of God: ``Be now assembled, ``he says, ``from the midst of Jerusalem;'' as though he said, that they could not be safe in the city, without going forth to meet their enemies: ``Blow ye the trumpet in Tekoa;'' and then he adds, ``Let the inhabitants of Bethhaccerem, ``that is, of the house of the vineyard, ``set up signals; for an evil is nigh at hand, and a great distress;'' from whom? from the Chaldeans. The prediction was more likely to be believed, when he thus pointed out their enemies, as it were, by his finger. It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 6:2-3

2. I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman

[160] See note on Jeremiah 4:6. The meaning of the verb is, no doubt, to haste, or to hasten. It is singular that the Septuagint render it in Jeremiah 4:6, "Haste ye," and here, "Be ye strong." The Targum renders it "migrate," or, remove ye. The idea of assembling it never has. The line rightly rendered is, — Hasten, ye sons of Benjamin, from the midst of Jerusalem. Where Blayney got the phrase, "Retire in a body," it is difficult to say. — Ed.

[161] "Raise ye a sign ({σήμειον})'' is the Septuagint and the Targum; ``Raise ye a banner (vexillum)'' is the Vulgate and the Syriac. The word has no connection with ``fire,`` as mentioned in our version, which has been derived from the Rabbins. Blayney's rendering is, ``light up a fire-beacon;'' but the words admit of no such meaning. It is a general expression, and may be rendered, ``Raise ye a signal;'' there is no definition as to what the signal was to be. --- Ed

[162] Literally, "For evil is seen from the north." So the Vulgate and the Targum. The verb in Kal, Niphal, and Hiphil, is rendered "look" in our version. See Genesis 19:28; Judges 5:28; Deuteronomy 26:15. But in Niphal, as it is found here, it may be rendered passively, "is seen;" and also in Psalm 85:12; and in Cant. 6:10, and in most other places. Blayney renders it, "is seen coming onwards," which is a paraphrase. — Ed.

2. Quietae (alii vertunt, speciosam; sed alter sensus melius quadrat, quietae igitur) et delicatae similem feci filiam Sion.

3. The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her; they shall pitch their tents against her round about; they shall feed every one in his place.

3. Super eam venient pastores et greges eorum, figent adversus eam tabernecula sua in circuitu; pascent vir ad manum suam (hoc est, quisque ad locum suum).

As the place, where the Prophet was born, was pastoral, he retained many expressions derived from his education; for God did not divest his servants of every natural endowment when he appointed them to teach his people. Hence the Prophet here speaks according to notions imbibed in his early age and childhood. The daughter of Sion, he says, is like a quiet maid, that is, one dwelling at leisure and enjoying herself; and yet she would be exposed to many indignities, for come shall shepherds, and around fix their tents; and the whole country would be subjected to plunder. But it is doubtful whether the Prophet says, that the daughter of Sion might be compared to a maid, tender and delicate, dwelling at ease and cheerful, or whether he means, that rest had been for a time granted to the people. There seems, indeed, to be no great difference, though there is some, between the two explanations.

If we take the verb, {דמיתי}, damiti, in the sense of comparing, as interpreters do, then it is the same as though the Prophet had said, ``I seem to see in the state of Jerusalem the image of a tender and delicate maid.'' Thus Jeremiah speaks in his own name. But the sentence may be more fitly applied to God, --- that he had made the daughter of Sion quiet for a time, and had given her peace with her enemies, so that she lived at ease and cheerfully.

Though these two views differ, yet the subject itself is nearly the same. The Prophet, no doubt, condemns here the Jews for their extreme torpidity, inasmuch as they had wholly misapplied the quietness granted them by God. He then proves that they were very thoughtless and stupid in thinking that their tranquillity would be perpetual, for it was God's favor, and only for a time. Hence he says, that the Jews were until that very day like a tender maid. For though the country of the ten tribes had been laid waste, and all had been driven away into exile, yet the kingdom of Judah continued safe. They had, indeed, been plundered by enemies, but in comparison with their brethren they had been very kindly treated. This, then, is the reason, why he says that they were like a maid delicate and tender. [163]

But he afterwards adds, Come shall shepherds, etc.; that is, there is no ground

[163] Calvin, with our version, has followed the Vulgate and the Syriac in this verse. Both the Septuagint and the Targum are widely different. The former have, "And taken away shall be thy height, daughter of Sion;" the latter, "Fair and delicate, how hast thou corrupted thy ways? Therefore confounded is the assembly of Sion." The Arabic is the same with the Septuagint, only it has "pride" instead of "height" ({τοῦψος}) Some have viewed the two first words as substantives, and have rendered the verse thus, --- To a pasture and a delightful habitation Have I likened the daughter of Sion. Disposed to this view were Gataker and Lowth. But what Blayney has said is true, that whenever the verb here used has the sense of likeness, it is followed by a preposition. Besides, the two first words are not substantives but adjectives, as the form, especially of the last, clearly shews. The verb has{דמיתי} in various passages the sense of thinking, counting, esteeming, regarding; as the result of comparing things together. See Judges 20:5; Esther 4:13; Psalm 48:9. There is a passage in Ezekiel 32:2, which is like the present, only the verb there is in Niphal; its literal rendering I consider to be the following: ``The young lion of the nations art thou deemed,`` or, thought to be. The literal rendering of this verse is as follows, --- Home-resident and delicate, Have I deemed the daughter of Sion. She was so regarded by God. Not like other nations, migratory, she had a home allotted to her by God himself; and she was nursed and sustained with all tenderness, like a delicate person. But owing to her sins, foreigners, as stated in the next verse, would come and take possession of her house, and deprive her of her enjoyments. --- Ed.

for the Jews to deceive themselves, because God has hitherto spared them, and restrained the assaults of enemies; for now shall come shepherds. He keeps to the same metaphor; ``come, ``he says, ``shall shepherds, ``together with their flocks; that is, come shall leaders of armies with their forces. But I have already reminded you, that the Prophet here has a regard to the city where he had been born, and adopts a pastoral language. Come then shall shepherds with their flocks; fix shall they their tents, and feed shall each in his place, he means that the whole of Jerusalem would be so much in the power of enemies, that each one would freely choose his own part or his own portion; for when there is any fear, then the shepherds gather their flocks, that they may assist one another; but when everything is in their own power, they move here and there as they please. This free acting then intimates, that the Jews would have no strength, and would be helped by no aid; but that the shepherds would surround the whole city and besiege it: every one, he says, would be in his own place. [164] It follows ---

Jeremiah 6:4-5

4. Prepare ye war against her; arise, and let us go up at noon. Woe unto us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out.

4. Sanctificate super eam proelium; surgite et ascendamus meridie: vae nobis, quia inclinavit dies, quia extensae sunt umbrae vespertinae.

5. Arise, and let us go by night, and let us destroy her palaces.

5. Surgite et ascendamus noctu, et demoliamur palatia ejus.

The Prophet leaves here the similitude he had adopted; for he does not now speak of shepherds, but expressly describes the enemies, as coming with great force, and furiously attacking and laying waste both the city and the whole of Judea. He was before like God's herald, proclaiming war; but he now, by a sort of personification, introduces the Chaldeans encouraging one another to fight. Sanctify, he says, war against her. So the Hebrews speak; for in all ages wars, we know, were proclaimed by a solemn rite. God, no doubt, has implanted this feeling in all nations, that no wars should be suddenly undertaken, and that no arms should be taken up except for a lawful reason: for the proclamation of war was a testimony, that they did not contend with one another but for causes just and necessary. It is indeed true, that wars have been often undertaken rashly, and for no just causes; but yet it was God's will that this custom should remain and continue in use, in order to take away excuse from men given to cruelty, or led by ambition to disturb the world and harass others. This then is the reason for this manner of speaking, Sanctify war; it is the same as though they declared and proclaimed a just war by a solemn ceremony. It was according to the common practice that the Prophet spoke when he said, Sanctify war against her, as we say in our language, Sommez --- la

Then follows the readiness of the enemies, yea, their incredible quickness, for

[164] There is evidently a {or{ו a {י} wanted before the second verb in this verse. The Septuagint and the Syriac read with ,{ו} and the Targum with .{י} The same is the case with the third verb, ;{רעו} but there are two MSS. which have the ,here{ו} with which the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Targum agree. Then the version would be, --- To her shall come shepherds and their flocks, And pitch by her their tents around, And they shall feed, every one in his border. ``To pitch against her'' seems improper: the proposition means{על} by or near, as well as against. And does{יד} not mean properly place, but side or border. It is indeed rendered place often in our version. See Numbers 2:17; Deuteronomy 23:12; Isaiah 56:5, 11; and in Isaiah 57:8, ``quarter.'' The ancient versions differ; the word seems not to have been understood. It is rendered by the Septuagint, ``by his hand;'' by the Vulgate, ``those under his hand;'' and by the Targum, ``his neighbor.'' --- Ed

he shews that they were extremely swift, Arise ye, and let us ascend at mid-day. But they who come to assail a city do so usually in the morning. When the heat prevails, it is not a suitable time, for the heat of the sun debilitates the body. Then enemies rest when night comes, except an unexpected advantage should offer itself: but having been refreshed, they rise early with recruited strength for fighting; they scale the walls or assail the city by other means, or beat down the walls by warlike instruments: but to begin the work at mid-day, when a city is to be attacked, is by no means usual. Hence the Prophet intimates, that so ripened was God's judgment, that the Chaldeans, after having come to the walls of the city, would not wait, no, not even a few hours. Arise ye, and let us ascend at mid-day

He then subjoins, Alas for us, for declined has the day, and the evening shadows are extended. He employs a military language; for soldiers, we know, are for the most part fierce and barbarous, and never speak in moderate terms. They have ever in their mouths, ``Alas for us!'' or they use some other words, reproachful either to God or to men. The Prophet then expresses the words of the soldiers; for he describes the Chaldeans, and represents, as I have said, to the Jews the scene as present, that he might dissipate their delusions, in which they were wholly asleep. Alas, then, for us! for declined has already the day, already have the evening shadows extended: they who have added, ``Too far,'' because they had declined more than usual, have mistaken the meaning of the Prophet. It is the same as though he had said, ``Already the night is nigh, and why should we give over? and why do we not make such an impetuous assault as to take the city in a moment?'' This is the real meaning of the words.

He afterwards adds, Arise ye, and let us ascend in the night; that is, ``As we cannot take the city in six hours, (from mid-day to night were six hours, for they divided the day into twelve hours, and the first hour began at the rising of the sun, and the twelfth hour closed the day,) as then we cannot take the city in six hours, let us attack it in the night.'' We see here how graphically is described the extreme ardor of their enemies; for they were urged on by the hidden power of God; and this is what Jeremiah intended to express. [165] He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 6:6

6. For thus hath the Lord of hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited; she is wholly oppression in the midst of her.

6. Quia sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Excidite ligna et fundite super Jerusalem aggerem (alii vertunt, balistam; sed nomen aggeris hic melius convenit;) ipsa est urbs visitationis (hic variant interpretes, et quidem exercitati in lingua Hebraea sic depravant sensum ut piqeat referre quid ipsi ausi sunt scribere,) tota oppressio (vel, rapina; nam {עשק} significat rapere, rapina ergo) in medio ejus.

[165] These two verses seem to have been the language of the enemies on their march towards Jerusalem. When men go to a chief city from any quarter, it is always ascending. When on their march, they encouraged one another to ascend by mid-day, as {{ו may be rendered, but the day declined before they reached the city; then they encouraged each other to continue their march in the night, --- Proclaim ye against her war: Rise, and let us ascend by mid-day. --- Alas for us! for declined has the day, For extended have become the shadows of the evening: Arise, and let us ascend by night, And destroy her palaces. The last word is rendered ``foundations'' by the Septuagint, --- ``houses'' by the Vulgate, --- and ``palaces'' by the Targum. This is an instance of the loose way in which the versions were often made. To ``sanctify war,`` is not to prepare it, but to proclaim it, as Calvin says, by a solemn ceremony. --- Ed.

The Prophet now points out the cause why a near calamity awaited both the city and the whole of Judea. Two things were necessary to be done: as the Jews had hardened themselves in their thoughtlessness, so that they disregarded all the threatenings of the prophets, it was necessary to expose and reprove this stupidity. This is what the Prophet has hitherto done. But the other thing needful to be done was, to make the Jews to know that they had not to do with the Chaldeans or other nations, but with God himself, with whom they had for a long time carried on war. The Prophet then, after having set before the eyes of his own kindred the calamity which was then nigh at hand, shews now that God was its author.

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts. He reminds them here of the judgment of God, lest they thought that they could overcome their enemies, even if they fought with the greatest ardor and the greatest courage, for they could not overcome God. Thus then saith the God of hosts; as though he had said, ``The Chaldeans will indeed bring their forces, which shall be great and strong; but the contest will be now with God, whom ye have so often and for a long time and so pertinaciously provoked.'' Thus then saith now the God of hosts, ---

Cut ye down wood; that is, ``The Chaldeans will not of themselves attack you, but they will fight for God, and serve him as hired soldiers.'' As we have seen elsewhere that God blows the trumpet, and sends by a hiss for whomsoever he pleases; so also he says now that the Chaldeans would carry on war under the authority and banner of God. Command them then did God to cut down wood and to cast up a mound. We indeed know that warlike engines were made of timber, but the most suitable word here, as it is evident, is mound.

It follows, She is the city of visitation. Jeremiah shews here that God would justly act towards the Jews, though with much severity, because they had nearly become putrid in their vices; for this reason he calls it the city of visitation. They therefore who render the words, ``that it may be laid waste, ``or, ``it is laid waste, ``misconceive the meaning; and indeed they touch neither heaven nor earth, for they consider not the Prophet's design, but only dwell on the words. But it is certain, that Jerusalem is called the city of visitation, because God had exercised long patience and suspended punishment, until the ripened time of vengeance came, so that it could no longer be endured, inasmuch as it had become more and more corrupt through the forbearance of God. It is, he says, the city of visitation; that is, ``The time of extreme vengeance is now come; for I have tried all means to see whether there was any hope of repentance; but I now find that she is wholly irreclaimable. She is then the city of visitation; its ruin cannot be suspended any longer.''

The Prophet obviates here, as I have already said, all those complaints which the Jews were ever ready to make; for they were wont to murmur when any severity appeared, and say, ``God deals cruelly with us; where is his covenant? where is that paternal kindness which he has promised to us?'' As then the Jews were wont thus to expostulate with God, the Prophet says that it was the city of visitation, and the whole of it, and not a part only. As then there was nothing pure in it, he says that it could no longer be spared: and he adds one kind of evil; but stating a part for the whole, he means (as it is said elsewhere, Jeremiah 7:11) that Jerusalem was a den

of thieves: he therefore says that it was full of rapines, and that oppression was in its very bowels. [166] It follows ---

Jeremiah 6:7

7. As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually is grief and wounds.

7. Sicuti scaturire facit puteus aquas suas (hoc est, sicuti scaturiunt aquae ex fonte, vel, puteo,) sic scaturire fecit malitiam suam; violentia et deceptio (aut, vastatio) audita fuit in ea coram facie mea assidue, dolor et percussio (alii vertunt, plagam; sed nomen percussionis melius convenit.)

The Prophet enlarges on what he had said in the last verse; for he had shewn, by mentioning one kind of evil, that Jerusalem was a den of thieves, as oppression dwelt in the midst of it. But he now, by a comparison, amplifies his former statement, and says, that violence, oppression, devastation, grief, and smiting, streamed forth like waters from a fountain. It is possible for many vices to break out from a place, but repentance afterwards follows; but when men cease not, and heap vices on vices, it then appears that they swell with wickedness, and even burst with it, as they cannot repress it: they are like a fountain, which ever bubbles up, and cannot contain its own waters. We hence see the object of the Prophet.

The word {בור}, bur, means a fountain, and {באר}, bar, means also a fountain, or a well, and they are no doubt synonymous: and hence appears the mistake of a very learned man among the Hebrews, who makes a difference between the two, and says that the first is a cistern, which receives waters, but has no streaming. That this is false appears from the words of the Prophet; for a cistern does not cast forth water.

But with regard to what is taught, we sufficiently understand that what the Prophet means is, --- that the Jews had so given up themselves to their vices, that they were ever contriving some new way of doing evil, as waters never cease to stream forth from the fountain; and it is a proof, as I have said, that a nation is wholly irreclaimable, when there is no cessation from evil deeds, when there is no intermission of injuries, when men ever indulge in their vices; and as the Jews could not deny that such was the atrocity of their wickedness, the Prophet again assumes the name of God, and says, Heard have been oppressions, and smitings are before me; as though he had said, ``They will gain nothing by evasions, for if they make a hundred excuses before men, it will be wholly useless to them when they shall come before God's tribunal.'' And he again adds the adverb dymt, tamid, continually, which answers to

[166] The two last lines may be thus rendered, — She, the city, to be visited is the whole of it: Oppression is in the midst of it. The verb {is{הפקד an infinite Niphal. Some, not perhaps without reason, have rendered the first line, ``For thus has Jehovah of hosts said.'' --- Ed.

the perpetual streaming of waters. [167] It follows ---

Jeremiah 6:8

8. Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.

8. Erudire Jerusalem, ne discedat (vel, avellatur) anima mea abs to; ne ponam to desertum (vel, solitudinem) et terram inhabitabilem (hoc est, quae non habitatur.)

Though the Prophet had spoken as though there was no remedy for the evils of Jerusalem, he yet exhorts it to seek peace with God, and addresses men past remedy in his name. It is then the same as though God was stopping in the middle course of his wrath, and saying, ``What is to be done? Shall I destroy the city which I have chosen?'' He then attributes here to God a paternal feeling, as we also find in several other places: God appeared as unwilling to proceed to extreme rigor in punishing his people.

``Alas! I will now take vengeance on mine enemies,''

he says by Isaiah. (Isaiah 1:24)

He called them enemies, and justly too; for as it was said before, they ceased not to carry on war against him; but he spoke with grief: ``Alas! must I take vengeance on mine enemies; I would, however, willingly spare them, were it possible.'' God is not indeed subject to grief or to repentance; but his ineffable goodness cannot be otherwise expressed to us but by such mode of speaking. So also, in this place, we see that God as it were restrains himself; for he had previously commanded the enemies to ascend quickly the walls, to overturn the towers, and to destroy the whole city; but now, as though he had repented, he says, Be instructed, [168] Jerusalem; that is, ``Can we not yet be reconciled?'' It is like the conduct of an offended father, who intends to punish his son, and yet desires to moderate his displeasure, and to blend some indulgence with rigor. Be then instructed; that is, ``There is yet room for reconciliation, if thou wishest; provided thou shewest thyself willing to relinquish that perverseness by which thou hast hitherto provoked me, I will in return prove myself to be a father.''

There is no doubt but the object of the threatenings of the prophets was to lead the people to know their sins, and suppliantly to seek pardon; for why were the unbelieving threatened, except that God thereby proved whether they were healable? It is indeed true that the reprobate are known by God, and that God does not try or seek to find what is in their hearts, as though he did not know their obstinacy; but as

[167] The verse, literally rendered, is as follows: — 7. As cast forth does a spring its waters, So cast forth is her wickedness: Violence and plunder are heard of in her; Before me continually are wounding and smiting. The first verb is in Hiphil, the second is in Huphal. "Violence" was the visible act; "plunder" or spoiling was the object or the motive; "wounding" was the effect; "smiting" was the cause. Such is often found to be the way of stating things observed by the Prophets. Blayney renders the two last words "sickness and smiting," and adds, that the two words are a Hendiadis, and signify "sickness occasioned by blows." The true reason for the order is what has been stated: it is according to what is commonly done in Scripture; what is found often is not the progressive, but the retrogressive order. The Septuagint and the Targum have strangely rendered this verse in a manner wholly inconsistent with the context; nor are the other versions much better. The Hebrew is plain enough. — Ed.

[168] Or, "Be warned," or, "Be reformed." The verb in Niphal is found in four other places, Leviticus 26:23; Psalm 2:10; Proverbs 29:19; Jeremiah 31:18, and rendered reformed, instructed, corrected, and chastised. It is the same as to receive correction and to become reformed. — Ed.

I have already said, God speaks here after the manner of men: and he also shews what is the end of teaching, which is to lead men to repentance; and this cannot be done without giving them the hope of pardon and reconciliation. The Prophet thus briefly shews here for what purpose he had hitherto so dreadfully threatened the Jews, even to lead them at length to repentance.

Lest torn shall be my soul from thee [169] Here God more clearly shews that he was as yet restrained by love. He alludes no doubt to a similitude which we have observed in another place; for God sustains the character of a spouse to his Church; and hence he shews, that he had not yet divested himself of that love which a husband has towards his wife. For a husband, when grievously offended at his wife, cannot immediately throw aside his conjugal affection; some feeling of this kind will ever remain. And we have seen in the fourth chapter, that God surpasses all husbands in kindness; for he says there, ``When a repudiated wife has found another husband, will the former receive her again? Return to me, thou harlot, return to me, thou strumpet and adulteress, and I am ready to pardon thee.'' It is the same course that God pursues here, ``Be instructed, Jerusalem, lest my soul wholly depart from thee;'' as though he had said, ``Even though I am now angry, and have resolved severely to punish thy perfidy and rebellion, I shall yet be reconciled to thee, provided thou returnest.'' And it is added, Lest I make thee a desolate land, a land uninhabited

The Prophet in short shews in this verse, that however grievously offended God was with his people, there was yet a hope of pardon; for he would be propitious to the people, if they turned and humbly confessed their sins, and sought to return into favor with him. It follows ---

Jeremiah 6:9

9. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall throughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine: turn back thine hand as a grapegatherer into the baskets.

9. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Racemando racemabunt quasi vitem reliquias Israel; reduc (vel, redire fac) manum tuam quasi vindemiator ad canistra (alii vertunt, ad ramos.)

God here confirms the former statement, as though he had said, that he dreaded a sight so sad and mournful, which yet the Jews disregarded. He then shews, that he did not in vain exhort the Jews, even though late, to repent, for he foresaw how dreadful would be their calamities. Hence he says, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Gleaning they shall glean; for the word here does not mean to gather the vintage, but to glean, grapiller, after the vintage. As after the harvest the poor follow and gather ears of corn here and there, until nothing remains in the field; so also in vintages when there is a gleaning, nothing remains. Hence God in the law forbade the vineyards to be gleaned, that there might be something left for the poor. (Leviticus 19:10; Deuteronomy 24:21.) But he says here, ``Gleaning they shall glean as a vine;'' he speaks not of the people but of the remnant.

The ten tribes had been plundered, and at length their whole country had been

[169] Or, “Lest forced shall be my soul from thee.” The verb means to drive, to thrust, to force. To “depart,“ as rendered by the ancient versions, and by our version, is too weak, and is not the idea; and still worse is “alienated,“ as rendered by Blayney. It intimates God’s unwillingness, as it were, to give up his chosen people, according to what Calvin observes. — Ed.

laid waste, most of them had been led into exile, but a few had sought hiding --- places for a time: and he says that they were like gleanings: ``though, ``he says, ``there be a few grapes, yet these shall follow.'' In short, the Prophet sets before the Jews that vengeance of God, which was known already to them as much as to the Israelites, the ten tribes: and yet he shews that God's vengeance was not completed, for there were still a few remaining, a gleaning: ``What then shall come of you? What indeed! ye have seen that your brethren have been plundered, ye have seen that they and their children have been slain; ye have seen that all kinds of cruelty have been exercised towards them; and yet after the name of Israel has been obliterated, and their country now deserted, has become a waste, God will still punish the remnant, and ye shall see that his judgment will shortly overtake them; and what do ye, wretched beings, yet look for? and how great is your torpidity, which never comes to an end? why do you not seek to be reconciled to God, when such an opportunity is offered to you?''

We now then apprehend the Prophet's object. And then he says, Return thy hand as a vintager to the baskets; that is, ``Behold the vintagers, they stimulate one another; so that there is no end of gleaning, as they ever return to their baskets, until they gather everything, until there remains not a grape on the vine.'' [170]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou kindly invitest us to repentance, and urgest us also by setting before us examples of thy wrath, --- O grant, that we may not continue perversely disobedient, but render ourselves tractable and submissive to thee, so that we may not meet with that dreadful severity which thou didst threaten to thine ancient people, but anticipate the wrath which thou didst formerly denounce on them; and may we thus with a pious heart return to thee, that we may find by experience that thou art ever a propitious Father to sinners, whenever with a sincere heart and without dissimulation they return to thee, through Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

LECTURE TWENTY-FOURTH

Jeremiah 6:10

10. To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.

10. Ad quem loquar? et quem contestabor ut audiant? Ecce incircumcisa auris

[170] Blayney's version is, — Turn again thine hand, like a grape-gatherer, unto the baskets. "That is, Take thou again into thine hand, and begin the work of gathering or gleaning anew." He takes it as God's address to the Chaldeans, in which they are exhorted repeatedly to return and to carry away captives the remaining inhabitants. But this does not comport with the simile of the vintager returning the hand to the baskets. It seems to be a command to put in safe custody those whom they took or gleaned, as a vintager, who, when he plucks a grape or a cluster, puts it safely in a basket to be carried away. The "hand" is put here for what the hand holds-the grapes or clusters. It is then the same as though he had said, "Lay up, as a vintager, what you glean, in baskets." The Jews were gathered, not to be destroyed, but to be carried away into captivity. This seems to have been the intimation here, — Return thine hand, like a vintager, unto the baskets. That is, Throw not away what you gather, but let the hand, that is stretched forth to reach the grapes, bring back what it gleans into the baskets. The Vulgate is, "Turn (converte) thine hand as a vintager to his basket." The Septuagint. "Turn ye ({ἐπιστρέψατε}) as a vintager to his basket.'' The Syriac is the same with the Vulgate, except that it has ``gleaning'' instead of ``basket.'' The Arabic corresponds with the Septuagint. The Targum has an unintelligible paraphrase. --- Ed

eorum, et non poterunt attendere; ecce verbum Jehovae fuit illis opprobrio? non acquieverunt in eo (hoc est, non oblectati sunt; {חפץ} significat capere oblectationem, Ils n'y ont prins nul plaisir.)

The Prophet here shews there was no reason for him to labor any longer in trying to reform the people, for he spoke to the deaf. He had said before, according to our lecture yesterday, that God was still ready to be reconciled to the Jews, if they repented; but now, referring to himself, he says that his words were wholly lost. Hence he asks a question as respecting a thing strange or unexpected. To whom, he says, shall I speak? and to whom shall I protest? He had indeed, as we found yesterday, exhorted the people to repent: but there is nothing inconsistent in all this; for he wished, as far as he could, to secure, the safety of the people. Even God had commanded this; and it was his will, as it was yesterday stated, that a testimony should be borne, that it was not his fault, according to what had been taught, that he was not reconciled to the people.

We now then see that the whole passage harmonizes; for Jeremiah performed his office in trying to find out whether the people were healable; but when he saw that such were their obstinacy that it allowed of no remedy, he exclaims as one astonished, To whom shall I speak? and to whom shall I protest? The meaning is, that the people were so given up to impiety, that the prophets spent their labor in vain while endeavoring to reform them. And the first clause he confirms by another, To whom shall I protest? He intimates that they had despised not only what had been plainly taught them, but also protestations, which possess much greater power. He means that their wickedness could be cured by no remedies, that they had not only rejected plain truth and serious warnings, but had also perversely resisted solemn protestations.

That they may hear, he says. He intimates, that though he had faithfully performed his office, yet his labor was without any fruit, for all the Jews were deaf. Hence he adds, Behold, uncircumcised is their ear This metaphor is common in the prophets. The uncircumcised ear is that which rejects all true doctrine. An uncircumcised heart is that which is perverse and rebellious. But we ought to understand the reason of this: as circumcision was an evidence of obedience, so the Scripture calls those uncircumcised who are unteachable, who cast away every fear of God and all sense of religion, and follow their own lusts and desires. But to be thus called was greatly disliked by the Jews; for circumcision gave them no common ground of confidence, since it was the symbol and pledge of adoption, and since they knew that they were thereby separated from other nations so as to be called God's holy people. But the Prophet divested them of this vain conceit by calling them uncircumcised in heart and ears, for they had dealt perfidiously with God when they promised to be obedient to his will.

The external sign was of itself nothing, when the end was disregarded. It was God's will to consecrate his ancient people to himself by circumcision: but when they became satisfied with the visible sign only, there was no longer the reality, and God's covenant was profaned. It is the same at this day with respect to baptism; they who wish to be deemed Christians, boast of it, while at the same time they shew no

fear of God, and while their whole life obliterates the true character of baptism. It is hence evident, that they are sacrilegious, for they pollute what is holy. And for this reason Paul calls the letter [the outward rite] of circumcision, a sign without the reality. (Romans 2:27.) So at this day baptism may be called the letter in all the profane, who have no regard to its design: for God receives us into his Church on the condition that we are the members of Christ, and that being ruled by his Spirit we renounce the lusts of our flesh. But when we seek under the cloak of baptism to associate God with the Devil, it is a most detestable sacrilege. Such was the stupid presumption of the Jews. This was the reason why the prophets so often charged them with being uncircumcised in hearts and ears: ``Ye are God's holy people; give a proof of this: ye indeed boast that you have been circumcised; surely, the cutting off of a small pellicle does not satisfy God; shew that your hearts and ears have been circumcised: but uncircumcision remains in your hearts, and it remains in your ears; ye are then heathens.''

We now then see the meaning of the Prophet, and also the reason why Scripture speaks so much of the uncircumcision of the hearts and ears, and it was this, --- to prove the Jews guilty of profaning that sign, which ought to have been a pledge of their adoption, and to have served as a profession of a new life.

It was not to lessen their guilt that Jeremiah said, They could not attend or give ear. If any one objects and asks, ``Ought it to be deemed a crime that they could not attend?'' The Prophet, as I have said, did not extenuate their guilt, but on the contrary shewed that they were so sunk in their vices, that they were not masters of themselves; as the case is with a drunkard, who is not in his right mind; but as he has contracted this vice of intemperance, his going astray or his ignorance is in no way excusable. So also the Prophet says, that the Jews could not attend to the word of the Lord, because they had surrendered themselves up to the Devil, so that they were become his slaves; as Paul says of those who were without the grace of God, that they were sold under sin, (Romans 7:14;) and the Scripture says elsewhere the same.

In short, Jeremiah here teaches us, that such was the habit of sinning contracted by the Jews, that they were no longer free to do what was right; for the Devil led them here and there at his pleasure, as though they were bound in his chains. And thus he sets forth their depravity as hopeless. Even Aristotle, though he is of no authority as to the power of the will, for he holds free-will, (he knew nothing of original sin and of the corruption of nature,) yet allows that those who are otherwise wholly free cannot do what is right, when they become so hardened in their vices, that intemperance, {ἀκράτεια}, rules in them: for intemperance is a tyrant, which so subdues all the feelings and senses of men, that all liberty is destroyed. We now then see what the Prophet had in view: he meant not that the Jews sinned, because they had not the power to resist; but because they had so plunged themselves into the abyss of wickedness, that they had sold themselves as it were to the Devil, who held them fast bound, and furiously drove them along as he pleased.

And this we learn more fully from what follows; for he says, Behold, the word of Jehovah has been to them a reproach; and it has not pleased them, or they have

not delighted in it; for {חפץ} means to take delight in a thing. The Prophet now more clearly shews, that the fault was in the Jews themselves, because they had despised God. Whence then was the impotence of which he had spoken? Even from their licentiousness, because they deemed God and his prophets as nothing. Since, then, their minds were thus hardened so as impiously to despise the truth, it followed that they could not hear and attend, inasmuch as they were deprived of all right knowledge. Whence was this? Even because they had closed their eyes and deafened their ears, and given themselves up altogether to the Devil, so that he led them into every kind of madness. In short, he shews at the end of the verse what was the beginning of all their evils, even because the word of God did not please them, that is, because they had cast aside every care for true religion, because they were not pleased when the prophets came and offered to them the favor of God. As then the truth had become unsavory to them, so that they rejected it, when it ought to have been especially delightful to them, so it happened that they became wholly stupid and void of all judgment and reason; and hence also came the uncircumcision of the ears of which mention has been made. [171] It follows ---

Jeremiah 6:11

11. Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together: for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him that is full of days.

11. Ergo indignatione (vel, ira) Jehovae repletus sum (copula hic ponitur vice illativae particulae, nisi adversative resolvere libeat, atqui, vel, ego autem) et laboravi continendo, ad effundendum super parvulum in compitis (hoc est, in publico, foris,) et super consilium juvenum ({בחורים} sunt proprie electi, nam {בחר} est eligere; sed ita vocantur juvenes, qui sunt in flore aetatis) similiter: quoniam etiam vir cum uxore capientur, senex cum pleno dierum.

The prophet here rises higher; for it was not enough simply to set forth the truth to refractory men, but it was necessary to stimulate them even sharply, and sometimes to wound them, for they could not otherwise be roused, so great was their hardness. Hence the Prophet proceeds in the same strain with what we observed yesterday; and he declares that he was full of the indignation of God. This may be taken passively and actively, --- that the Prophet was indignant with holy zeal, because he undertook the cause of God, --- or, that he dreaded the judgment, which the Jews nevertheless in no way heeded. But he speaks here no doubt according to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as though he said, that he did not announce what his own mind suggested, but what was dictated by the Spirit of God. This indignation is, in short, to be applied to what was taught, as though he had said, ``If I address you with great vehemence, think not that as a man I forget moderation, being influ-

[171] This is a remarkable verse, and shews, as Calvin explains, the degraded and corrupt state of the nation in a very striking manner, — To whom shall I speak, And protest, so that they will hear? Behold, uncircumcised is their ear, So that they cannot hearken; Behold, the word of Jehovah Has become to them a reproach, They delight not in it. “A reproach” is to be the subject of reproach: the word of God by his prophets was despised and treated with contempt. This was the visible and palpable effect, but the cause was, that they had no delight in it or love for it.

enced by wrath; but the Spirit of God leads and impels me. Whatever indignation then is found in my language, whatever vehemence and sharpness and menacing, all this is from God's Spirit, and not from my own feelings as a man.'' It was on this account that he says, that he was filled with the indignation of God.

What follows confirms this statement; for he says, that he was wearied with restraint; as though he said, that so great was the impulse of God's wrath, that it could not be withheld from breaking out into vehemence. And hence we learn, as I have said, that the Prophet declares no other thing than that he was not moved by his own indignation, or by any feeling of his own nature, but that he of necessity followed where he was led by the hidden influence of God's Spirit, lest what he taught might be despised; for the Jews had long accustomed themselves to use their taunts and to say, that they were not to be frightened like children. That the Jews then might not thus trifle, Jeremiah declares, that he was so filled with the indignation of God, that he could contain himself no longer, but must denounce on his own kindred what God had committed to his charge. As we shall elsewhere see the same mode of speaking, and in more express terms, I shall proceed without making any farther remarks.

He afterwards says, I shall pour it out, etc. He no doubt continues the same subject. He then says, that since he could no longer suppress the vengeance of God, whose herald he was, he would now pour it out, and that upon the children, he says, in the streets He doubtless means by these words that there was nothing pure among the people, for the very children were involved in the same guilt. Since, then, impiety so prevailed that even children in their tender age were not exempt from it, it was an evidence of a hopeless condition. This is what the Prophet means by saying, that he would pour wrath upon children. Then he adds, upon the assembly, etc. The word {סוד}, sud, means a congregation, or an assembly; and it means also counsel. But as the Prophet speaks of streets, there seems to be a contrast between streets and counsels, as though he said, that children playing in the streets were without any counsel or understanding: but still I include with them the old and the grown up men, for they are all exposed to God's judgment. He then adds, the counsel of young men; for there is more discretion and prudence in young men grown up to maturity. The Hebrews do not call youths of fifteen {בחורים}, bachurim, but men of full and mature age; and the word is derived from a verb which means to choose. They then who are in the flower of their age are called {בחורים}, bachurim, because they are endued with discretion, and do not play in the streets like children. The Prophet then says, that God's wrath would now be poured forth on children, and also on men grown up to the age of twenty or thirty.

For the husband, he says, with his wife shall be taken, the aged with the full of days Some think that the full of days was the decrepit: but by {זקן}, zaken, I understand the aged, and by the full of days, all those already grown into maturity, as those from fifty to eighty may be so called. He means, in short, that no one would be exempt from suffering God's vengeance, as impiety had pervaded all stations,

ranks, and ages. [172] It follows ---

Jeremiah 6:12

12. And their houses shall be turned unto others, with their fields and wives together: for I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord

12. Et volventur (quasi per circuitum, haec est propria significatio, vertentur) domus eorum ad alienos, agri et uxores similiter; quia extendam manum meam super habitatores terrae, dicit Jehova.

One kind of vengeance only he mentions, --- that the Jews would be deprived of their land, which they thought would ever remain in peace to them. Inasmuch as it had been said,

``This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell,'' (Psalm 132:14)

they imagined that they could not be driven out of it: and they entertained the thought, that their dwelling in the land of Canaan was as certain as that of the sun and moon in the heavens. As then they deceived themselves by this foolish confidence, the Prophet says, that there would be a change, that God would transfer their houses to foreign nations.

He then mentions their fields and their wives All this seemed incredible to the Jews: but it was necessary to denounce on them so dreadful a vengeance, that they might at length be awaked. And then he subjoins the reason why: For God will extend his hand. The Prophet here reprobates their obstinacy, because it made God their enemy; as though he had said, that there was no cause for them to think that the possession of the land would be undisturbed, for God was offended with them. Whence, indeed, did the possession of the land come to them, except from God's gratuitous favor? Now, if God was adverse to them, what hope remained for them? We now, then, see that the Prophet at the end of the verse mentions the cause, that the Jews might know that what he said of the transfer of their houses, lands, and wives to others was not incredible. It follows ---

Jeremiah 6:13

13. For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

13. Quia a parvo eorum usque ad magnum eorum omnis (vel, quilibet) con cu-

[172] There are two or three points in this verse differently explained. The fury or indignation of Jehovah has been viewed as the message which the Prophet had to deliver, which strongly expressed God's displeasure. See Jeremiah 1:9, and Jeremiah 20:9. The verb for pouring forth is either in the imperative or in the infinitive mood. The Vulgate and the Syriac render it as an imperative; but the Septuagint, the Targum, and the Arabic give it, as in our version, in the future indicative, the first person. Venema follows the Vulgate: but Blayney takes it to be in the imperative mood; which seems most consistent with the whole of the passage. The view of most as to "the old" and "the full of years" is, that the first is mature old age, and that the second is the last stage of life, the age of decrepitude. The full of days is "one" as Blayney says, "who has arrived at the full period of human life;" and hence "Abraham, Isaac, David, and Job are said to have died full of years, or of days." See Isaiah 65:20. Though the general meaning is given in our version, yet the more literal I conceive to be the following, — But with the wrath of Jehovah have I been filled; I am weary of restraining to pour it forth On the child in the street, And on the assembly of young men also; Yea, both man and woman shall be taken, The aged and the full of days. It is unusual to have two infinitives following one another: but the Welsh is capable of expressing the Hebrew literally, — Blinais ymattal dywallt. Nothing can express the original more exactly. It is better to say "man and woman, "as Gataker proposes, than "husband and wife;" for the object is to shew, that all, including every age and both sexes, were to be visited with judgment. — Ed

piscit cupiditatem (hoc est, cupidus est lucri, vel, addictus avaritiae;) et a propheta usque ad sacerdotem quilibet operatur mendacium (hoc est, fraudulenter agit.)

The Prophet now again declares, that it was nothing strange that God resolved to deal with so much severity with that people, and to execute on them extreme vengeance; for no part was whole and sound, but impiety had pervaded all ranks. It might, indeed, be ascribed to the young, as well as to the old, for he says, From the small to the great; but I prefer to understand the first clause of the poor and the lower orders, and the second of the higher ranks, who excelled in power and wealth among the people. He says, then, that contempt of God and every kind of wickedness prevailed, not only in one part but in the whole community, so that there was no soundness from the head to the soles of the feet. We now, then, perceive what the Prophet means by saying, From the small to the great [173]

And this appears still clearer from the end of the verse, where he says, From the prophet to the priest He amplifies here what he had said of the small and the great. Hence we see, that by the great he understands not those of mature or advanced age, but such as were in dignity and honor, who were in esteem on account of their wealth or of other endowments. So also, on the other hand, he does not call those small who were young, but such as were despised, who were of the lowest order, and formed as it were the dregs of society: for as I have said, he amplifies what he had said, by adducing the prophets and the priests. Even though the king and his court were extremely wicked, yet some care for religion ought to have prevailed among the prophets and the priests; there ought at least to have been among them some decency; for they were appointed for the purpose of carrying light for others. As, then, even these were apostates, and had degenerated from the true worship of God, what could have been found among the rest of the people?

We now, then, see that the mouth of the ungodly was here closed, so that they could not expostulate with God or blame his severity, for they had all arrived at the highest pitch of impiety, inasmuch as the prophets and the priests were no less corrupt than the common people.

By saying that all coveted covetousness, he refers to frauds and base gain; in that he includes every kind of avariciousness. [174] By saying that the priests and the prophets wrought falsehood, or acted fraudulently, he means the same thing, but in other words, even that there was no integrity in those teachers who ought to have been leaders to the blind: for God had ordained them that they might, as I have said, carry light to all others and shew them the way of salvation. It follows ---

Jeremiah 6:14

[173] "From the small of them even to the great," Septuagint; "From the less to the greater," Vulgate; "From the least of them even to the greatest of them," Targum, Syriac, and Arabic. The last is the best. The positive degree is often put in Hebrew for the superlative. See Jonah 3:5. — Ed.

[174] The words literally are "gaining gain," rendered in Proverbs 1:19, and Proverbs 15:27, "greedy of gain." The Septuagint give only a general idea, "performed unlawful things;" the Vulgate has, "given to avarice;" the Targum, "gape after riches." The prevailing sin of all ranks was covetousness; and the special sin of the priests and prophets was falsehood: they taught falsely. The verse may be thus rendered, — For from the least of them to the greatest of them, His all is to gain; And from the prophet to the priest, His all is to act falsely. "His all" means all his object, or all that he did. — Ed.

14. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

14. Et sanarunt plagam filiae populi mei super levitate (hoe est, super nihilo, de nihilo,) dicendo, Pax, pax, et non pax.

This is to be applied to the prophets and priests alone; they not only corrupted the people by their bad example, but also shook off every fear of God, and by their impostures and false boasting took away every regard and respect for the teaching of the true prophets. He then says, that they healed to no purpose, or with levity or slightness, [175] the wound of the people He says, by way of concession, that they had healed the wounds of the people: but it was no cure, when the evil was increasing. They were like the unskillful, who by rashly applying false remedies, cause inflammation, even when the disease is not serious; or like those who are only bent on easing pain, and cause the increase of the disease within, which is the more dangerous as it is more hidden. This is not to heal, but to kill. But the Prophet, as I have said, concedes to them the work of healing, and then states the issue, --- that they were executioners and not physicians. They have healed, he says, the wound of my people: He takes the words, as it were, from their mouth, ``Ye are verily good physicians! for by your flatteries ye have soothed my people: there was need not only of sharp medicine to stimulate and to cause pain, but also of caustics and of amputations; but ye have only applied lenients. This is your way of healing! ye have thus healed the wound of my people, even by plasters and ointments to drive inward the disease; but what has been the effect?''

He then immediately shews what sort of healing it was: It was saying, Peace, peace The evil we know is an old one, common almost to all ages; and no wonder, for no one wishes otherwise than to please himself; and what we observe daily as to the ailments of the body, is the same as to the diseases of the soul. No sick person willingly submits to the advice of his physician, if he prohibits the use of those things which he desires: ``What am I then to do? it were better to die than to follow this advice.'' And then, if the physician bids him to take a bitter dose, he will say, ``I would rather a hundred times endure any pain than to drink that draught.'' And when it comes to bleeding and other more painful operations, as caustics and things of this kind, O the sick man can stand it no longer, and wishes almost any evil to his physicians. What then experience proves to be true as to bodily diseases, is also true, as I have said, as to the vices of the mind. All wish to deceive themselves; and thus it happens that they wish for such prophets as promise them large vintages and an abundant harvest, according to what is said by the Prophet Micah:

[175] The words {{על {נקלה} --- ``with what is worthless,`` or base, or contemptible, are rendered, ``{ἐξουθενοῦντες} --- regarding as nothing,'' or despising, by the Septuagint; ``cum ignominia --- with reproach'' or contempt, by the Vulgate and Arabic; ``illusione --- by illusion,'' by the Syriac; and ``with false words,`` by the Targum. The same phrase occurs in Jeremiah 8:11. The whole verse is there omitted by the Septuagint; the Vulgate has ``ad ignominiam --- to reproach;'' the Arabic, ``in jocos --- for sport; the Syriac, ``nugis --- with trifles;'' but the Targum is the same as here. None give the same version but the last. In the Complutensian Edition, which has this verse in Jeremiah 8:11, the Greek version is evidently a version of the Vulgate. The idea of ``slightly,`` or ``superficially,`` as rendered by Blayney, is not countenanced by any of the foregoing versions, nor can the original words bear this meaning. The word ,{נקלה} is found as a Niphal participle, and applied to man, as a despised, contemptible, or worthless being, --- 1 Samuel 18:23; Proverbs 12:9; Isaiah 3:5; Isaiah 16:14. But here it refers to the means used for healing, which, according to all the versions, was something contemptible, worthless, useless, and which is afterwards named, being no more than saying, Peace, peace, when in fact there was no peace. And healed have they the bruise Of the daughter of my people with what is worthless, Saying, ``Peace, peace;'' and there was no peace. --- Ed.

``Behold,'' says God, ``ye wish to have prophets who will speak to you of rich provisions and of every kind of affluence; and ye do not wish them to prophesy evil; ye would not have them to denounce on you the punishment which you fully deserve.'' (Micah 2:11)

As, then, the despisers of God wished to be soothed by flatteries, and reject the best and the most salutary remedies, hence God has from the beginning given loose reins to Satan, and hence impostors have gone forth, whose preaching has been, Peace, peace; but to no purpose; for there is nothing real in such healing, for the Lord says, there is no peace

The bolder any one is who professes to heal, if he be unskillful, the more disastrous will be the issue. Hence the Prophet shews that the cause of the extreme calamity of the Jews was, because they were deceived by their own priests and teachers. He does not at the same time, as it has been elsewhere observed, excuse them, as though the whole blame belonged to their false teachers. For how was it that the false prophets thus fascinated them? Even because they knowingly and willfully destroyed themselves; for they would not receive honest and skillful physicians: it was therefore necessary to give them up to such as killed them. It follows ---

Jeremiah 6:15

15. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord

15. An confusi sunt (vel, an puduit eos,) quia abominationem patrarunt? etiam non puduit eos (hoc est, nihil prorsus in ipsis fuit pudoris) etiam erubescere nescierunt: propterea cadent inter cadentes, in tempore visitationis eorum ruent, inquit Jehova.

Jeremiah turns now his discourse to the whole people. In the last verse he reproved only the priests and the prophets; he now speaks more generally, and says, that they had put off all shame. ``Behold,'' he says, ``they are sufficiently proved guilty, their wickedness is manifest, and yet there is no shame. Their disgrace is visible to heaven and earth; angels and all mortals are witnesses of their corruption; but they have such a meretricious front that they are touched by no sense of shame.'' He means, in these words, that the wickedness of the people was past all remedy; for they had arrived to that degree of stupor, of which Paul speaks, when he calls those {ἀπηλγηκότας}, who were obstinate in their vices, who saw no difference between right and wrong, between white and black. (Ephesians 4:19.)

This, then, is what the Prophet means when he says, Have they been ashamed? But a question is much more emphatical, than if it was a simple reprobation or affirmation. They have not been even ashamed, he says. In their very shame, they knew not what it was to be touched by any shamefacedness. This may be classed with those reproofs, by which they had not been subdued; as though he had said, ``Efforts having been made to expose their effrontery, in not humbling themselves under the hand of God; they shall therefore fall among the fallen;'' that is, ``I will dispute no longer with them, nor contend in words, but will execute on them my judgment.'' Fall, then, shall they among the fallen; as though he had said, ``I have

more than sufficiently denounced war on them: had they been healable it would have availed to their conversion, that they had been so often warned; and still more, that I have so sharply stimulated them to come to me: but I will now no more employ words, on the contrary, I will execute my vengeance, so that the calamity which they have derived may devour them.'' [176]

They shall wholly fall, he says, in the day of their visitation From this second clause we understand more clearly what it is or what he means when he speaks of falling among the fallen, which is, that they should wholly fall, when God would come as it were with a drawn sword to destroy them, having been wearied with giving them so many warnings.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that inasmuch as thou seekest daily to restore us to thyself, and so arrangest thy word, as now kindly to allure us, and then to reprove us severely, and even to drive us by threatenings, --- O grant, that we may not be altogether unteachable; but so rule us by the spirit of meekness, that we may submit ourselves to thee and to thy holy word, and be so terrified by the fear of thy judgment as yet ever to taste of the sweetness of thy mercy, so that we may cleave to thee in Christ thy Son, until we shall at length fully know that thou art our Father, and enjoy the fruit of our adoption in the same Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Twenty-Fifth

Jeremiah 6:16

16. Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein

16. Sic dicit Jehova, State super vias, et videte, et inquirite de semitis seculi (hoc est, antiquis) quaenam via sit recta; et ambulate in ea, ut inveniatis requiem animae vestrae: et dixerunt, Non ibimus (vel, non ambulabimus.)

The Prophet teaches us here that the fault of the people could not be extenuated as though they had sinned through ignorance; for they had been warned more than necessary by God. The same sentiment is found in Isaiah,

``This is your rest; but they would not hear.'' (Isaiah 28:12.)

But our Prophet more at large condemns the Jews; for God had commanded them to stand in the ways, to look and to inquire respecting all the old paths. He uses a similitude: and we ought not to doubt respecting the way, since it has been shewn

[176] The Syriac is the only version that puts the first verb in an interrogatory form. "They have been confounded," is the Septuagint and Vulgate; and similar is the rendering of the Arabic and the Targum. The verb, taken literally, it being in Huphal, may be rendered, "They have been put to shame," or have been made to be ashamed; that is, they had been exposed to shame; but this shame they felt not, according to what follows. Their previous evils were enough to make them feel ashamed; but they had not that effect: hence entire ruin is denounced on them at the end of the verse. The rendering of the whole is as follows, — 15. Exposed to shame have they been, Because abomination have they wrought: Neither with shame are they ashamed, Nor how to be abashed do they know; Therefore fall shall they with the fallen; At the time when I shall visit them, They shall perish, saith Jehovah. There is no necessity to make this verse and the 12th of chap. 8 (Jeremiah 8:12) the same in every particular, as Blayney attempts to do. Both passages are the same in meaning, with a little variety in some of the words. The particle {גם,} repeated, may be rendered by, either and nor. See Numbers 23:5. The verb is{הכלים} an infinitive Huphal. It is rendered as an infinitive by the Vulgate. ``They shall perish,`` which is according to the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Arabic, is literally, ``They shall be made to stumble.'' --- Ed

to us by the mouth of God. But the impiety of the people is exposed and reproved, because they did not so much as open their eyes, when God shewed them the way and allowed them a free choice: for he introduces God here, not strictly as one who commands, but as one who shews so much indulgence, that the people were free to choose the way they approved and thought best. When God deals so kindly with men, and so condescendingly sets before them what is useful and expedient, it is the basest ingratitude to reject such kindness on God's part.

We now then understand the Prophet's design in saying, that God had commanded them to stand in the ways and to consider what was best to be done. Consider, he says, and ye shall find rest, that is, that ye may find rest (for the copulative here denotes the end) to your souls [177] Here the Prophet means, that it remained only with the Jews to secure prosperity and a quiet state; for if they had obeyed the counsel of God, rest would have been provided for them: in short, he means, that they were miserable through their own willfulness; for God had set before them the prospect of a happy condition, but this favor had been despised by them, and wantonly despised, as these words intimate, And they said, We will not walk in it

We see that the people's perverseness is here discovered; because they might have otherwise objected and said, that they had been deceived, and that if they had been in time warned, they would have obeyed good and wise counsels. In order to cut off this handle, Jeremiah says, that they from deliberate wickedness had rejected the rest offered them by God: they have said, We will not walk in it. This resolution deafly shews that they obstinately remained in their sins; so that the rest, which was within their reach, was not chosen by them.

This passage contains a valuable truth, --- that faith ever brings us peace with God, and that not only because it leads us to acquiesce in God's mercy, and thus, as Paul teaches us, (Romans 5:1,) produces this as its perpetual fruit; but because the will of God alone is sufficient to appease our minds. Whosoever then embraces from the heart the truth as coming from God, is at peace; for God never suffers his own people to fluctuate while they recumb on him, but shews to them how great stability belongs to his truth. If it was so under the Law and the Prophets, as we have seen from Isaiah, how much more shall we obtain rest under Christ, provided we submit, to his word; for he has himself promised it, ``Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.'' And ye shall find rest, he says here, to your souls. This passage then serves to commend this celestial truth, that it avails to pacify consciences, so that there is no perplexity nor doubt. It follows ---

Jeremiah 6:17

[177] Blayney renders the word for "rest," {,{מרגוע ``restoration;'' but his long note is not satisfactory. It is rendered, strangely enough, by the Septuagint, ``purification --- {ἁγνισμὸν};'' but by the Vulgate, ``refreshment --- refrigerium;'' and by the Syriac and Targum, ``rest --- requiem;'' which seems to be its meaning, especially here, as it stands in contrast with the false peace promised by the false prophets. The representation is that of travelers, who, when doubtful as to the right road, are to stand, that is, to stop, to look, and also to inquire. There were several old paths before them, but they were to inquire which was the good way, and to walk in it. This was what Jehovah by his prophets had exhorted the people to do, who had false prophets among them; but they refused to do so. It is a relation of what God had done, --- Thus has Jehovah said, --- ``Stand ye by the ways and look, And ask, as to the paths of old, Where that is, the good way; And walk ye in it, And ye shall find rest to your souls:'' But they said, ``We will not walk in it.'' There were many paths of old, or of antiquity, as there are still; but there was one good way, the way of God's word. That the way is old is no proof that it is good. Error's ways are as old as the way of truth. --- Ed.

17. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.

17. Et constitui super eos speculatores, ut attenderent [178] ad vocem (hoc est, clangorem) tubae: et dixerunt, Non attendemus.

This is an explanation of the last verse, yet not simply so; for the Prophet by a similitude aggravates the obstinacy of the people, who were not only deaf to the Prophet's admonitions, but would not be roused by the sound of the trumpet, nor even attend to it. The sound of the trumpet ought to have penetrated into their minds more than anything else for two reasons, --- because it was louder than any voice of man, --- and also, because we do not usually hear the trumpet sounding, except when war is at hand, or when there is the fear of war.

We hence see why the Prophet, after having announced his message, mentions the sound of the trumpet; as though he had said, that not only the prophets were despised, while teaching the people, but that the sound of the trumpet, announcing the approach of war, was not attended to by them. The stupidity of the people, and not only their stupidity, but as I have said, their perverseness also, was more fully proved, than if the Prophet had simply said, that they had resolved not to hear. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 6:18-19

18. Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them.

18. Propterea audite gentes, et cognosce coetus quid in ipsis futurum sit.

19. Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.

19. Audi, terra, Ecce ego adduco malum (hoc est, cladem) super populum hunc, fructum cogitationum ipsorum, qui ad verba mea non fuerunt attenti, et legem meam spreverunt (ad verbum, et legem meam spreverunt in ipsa; sed non est ambiguus sensus, quod scilicet vel abjecerint vel spreverint, vel pro nihilo duxerint; verbum hoc significat rejicere et spernere, significat etiam reprobare; jam semel hoc usus est Propheta et saepius utetur.)

He turns now to address the nations, which had never heard anything of true religion. But the design of the apostrophe was, to make the Jews ashamed of their insensibility and deafness, for more attention and understanding were found among heathen nations. This was surely very great shame: the Jews had been plainly taught by the Law and by the Prophets, God had continued morning and evening to repeat the same things to them, that the nations, who had never heard the prophets and to whom the Law had not been given, should still be endued with more understanding and judgment than the Jews --- this was very shameful and really monstrous. Thus the Prophet's design was to expose their disgraceful conduct by addressing the nations, and saying, Hear, ye nations

Then he says, Know, thou assembly The words used are {דעי}, doi, and {עדה}, ode; and though the letters are inverted, there is yet an alliteration by no means

[178] There are several MSS. which have {ו before this verb, and such no doubt was the copy of Calvin. But all the versions render the verb as an imperative, as no doubt it is --- Ed

ungraceful. With regard to the meaning, the Prophet shews that he found no disciples among the elect people, for they were like brute beasts or stones or trunks; he therefore turned to address the nations, as he despaired of any fruit to his labors among the Jews: ye nations, then, hear, and know, thou assembly, (the reference is to any people,) what shall be to them Some interpreters apply this to their vices, and give this version, ``What their state is, ``or, ``What atrocious vices prevail and reign among them.'' But I prefer to apply it to their punishment, though I do not contend for this view, as there is a probability in favor of the other. But the Prophet seems here to send for the nations, that they might be witnesses of the just vengeance of God, because the people's impiety had become irreclaimable. ``Hear then what shall be done to them.'' He had threatened the Jews as he had done before, and as he will often do hereafter; but his design in this place was to reproach them for being so intractable; for he expected that his labors would produce more fruit among the nations than among them. [179]

He then adds, Hear, thou earth This is general, as though he said, ``Hear ye, all the inhabitants of the earth: ``Behold, I am bringing an evil on this people He would have directly addressed the Jews, had they ears to hear; but as their vices and contempt of God had made them deaf, it was necessary for him to address the earth. Now, God testifies here that he should not act cruelly in visiting with severity this people, as he would only reward them as they deserved. The sum of what is said then is, that however grievous might be the punishment he would inflict, yet the people could not complain of immoderate rigor, for they should only receive what their works justly deserved. But Jeremiah not only speaks of their works, but he mentions the fruit of their thoughts; for they concocted their wickedness within, so that they did not offend God through levity or ignorance. By thoughts, then, he means that daily meditation on evil, to which the Jews had habituated themselves. So then their interior wickedness and obstinacy are here set forth.

He afterwards adds, Because they have not to my words attended, and for nothing have they esteemed my law. We ever see that the guilt of the Jews was increased by the circumstance, that God had exhorted them by his servants, and that they had rejected all instruction. That they then would not hearken, and that they counted the law and instruction as nothing, made it evident that their sin could not by any pretense be excused; for they knowingly and openly carried on war with God himself, according to what is said of the giants.

We may learn from this passage, that nothing is more abominable in the sight of God than the contempt of divine truth; for his majesty, which shines forth in his word, is thereby trampled under foot; and further, it is art extreme ingratitude in men, when God himself invites them to salvation, willfully to seek their own ruin and to reject his favor. It is no wonder then that God cannot endure the contempt of

[179] The version of the Septuagint is wholly inconsistent with the drift of the passage. The other ancient versions are materially according to our version. Several MSS. read {for{ודעו ;{ודעו} and this renders the meaning much better. Then is{עדה} ``testimony'' as well as ``assembly,`` which appears here very much without meaning. The two verses would then be as follows, --- 18. Therefore hear, ye nations, And know the testimony which is against them; 19. Yea, hear thou earth, --- Behold, I am bringing an evil on this people, The fruit of their own devices, Because to my words they have not hearkened; And my law, they have ever rejected it. The preposition {ב} is found after the verb, to testify, and is even rendered to or against; and coming after the substantive, testimony, it ought to be rendered the same. --- Ed

his word; by which his majesty, as I have said, is dishonored, and his goodness, by which he would secure the salvation of men, is treated with the basest ingratitude. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 6:20

20. To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me.

20. Ad quid hoc mihi thus e Sabeis venit, et calamus bonus e terra longinqua? holocausta vestra non sunt ad beneplacitum (hoc est, non placent, neqne grata sunt,) et sacrificia vestra non sunt suavia (aut, jucunda) mihi.

The Prophet here replies to those hypocrites, who thought that they made an expiation when they had offered incense and sacrifices, as though that was all that was necessary in serving God: and hence we shall hereafter see, that the Temple had become the den of thieves; for when they sedulously offered incense every day and performed other ceremonies, they thought that God was pacified. Thus hypocrites ever mock God with their fopperies and regard God as extremely cruel, when not satisfied with external display. This was a perpetual evil, with which the prophets had to contend: and hence the notion is often found referred to by our Prophet,

``I desired not sacrifices; I commanded not your fathers, when I stretched forth my hand to bring them out of Egypt, to offer burnt --- offerings to me, but only to obey my voice,''
(Jeremiah 7:21, 22)

So we find in other prophets: the Psalmist says,

``If I hunger, I will not tell thee,'' (Psalm 50:12)

It is said also by Micah,

``What does God require of thee, but to humble thyself before him? He seeks not thousands of rams nor thousands of oxen from thy herds,'' (Micah 6:7)

And we see at this day, that men cannot be rightly taught, except we carry on war against that external splendor with which they will have God to be satisfied. As then men deceive themselves with such trifles, it is necessary to shew that all those things which hypocrites obtrude on God, without sincerity of heart, are frivolous trumperies. This is the import of what is here taught.

There is, then, no doubt but that the Jews punctually offered their sacrifices, and observed the legal rites. All this might have appeared very commendable; but God gives this answer, To what purpose does frankincense come to me from the Sabeans, and a sweet cane [180] (that is, odoriferous) from a far country? Thus the Prophet here anticipates hypocrites, that he might not leave them --- what they might have objected: for while they spent a large sum of money on their forms of worship, they thought that God was as it were bound to them: and where they also bestowed much

[180] It is rendered "cinnamon" by the Septuagint and Arabic, "a sweet smelling reed" by the Vulgate, and "an aromatic reed" or cane by the Syriac and Targum. The literal rendering of the verse is as follows, — 20. For what purpose is this done to me? Incense, from Sheba it comes, And the precious reed, from a distant land: Your burnt-offerings, they are not acceptable, And your sacrifices, they are not pleasing to me. The reed or cane was dried and powdered, and formed a part of the incense. The latter is mentioned first, and then one of its ingredients. Sheba and the distant land are the same. The same order is to be observed in the burnt-offerings and sacrifices; the finished act first, and then the previous act of presenting a sacrifice. — Ed.

labor, they supposed that their' toil could not be superfluous or useless. And under the Papacy we observe the same thing: when any one builds a splendid church, and adorns it with gold and silver and supplies it with rich furniture, and then provides a revenue for saying masses, he thinks that lie holds in his hands all the keys of the kingdom of heaven, so that he can push in even against the will of God. Similar is the madness of the Papists, when they undertake pilgrimages: when they labor and toil, they think that every step they take must be numbered before God, and that God would be unjust, were he not to approve of what is offered to him with so much trouble. Such was also the conceit of the Jews. As their incense, brought from the Sabeans, that is, from the east, even from Persia, was precious, and cost a considerable sum of money, they wished that this should be deemed a satisfaction for all their sins; and they looked for the same benefit from the cane: as the most odoriferous cane was bought at, a high price, they expected that it would be of account before God, and that it would avail to compensate for their punishment. This is the folly which God here treats with contempt. ``What are they to me, ``he says, ``your expenses? I indeed count as nothing all that ye spend in buying incense and sweet cane.'' And then he speaks of the Sabeans and of a far country.

He afterwards adds, Please me do not your burnt --- offerings, and your sacrifices are not acceptable Under one kind Jeremiah includes the whole worship according to the law; and yet it had been divinely appointed: this is indeed true, but for another purpose. Fasting does not of itself displease God; but it becomes an abomination to him, when it is thought to be a meritorious work, or when some holiness is connected with it. The same is true as to sacrifices; for they who sought to pacify God by victims robbed Christ of his honor: it was to transfer the favor, which comes from Christ, to a calf or to a goat: and what a sacrilege was this, and how abominable? When, therefore, the Jews set such a high value on their sacrifices, they sought first childishly to trifle with God, as though these were expiations to pacify him; and then to offer burnt --- offerings, to slay an animal, for pacifying God, was to change his nature; and lastly, it was, as I have said, to rob Christ of his honor: for expiation is to be sought by no other means than through his blood, by which we are cleansed from every stain through the Holy Spirit, who sprinkles it on our hearts. But when this was attributed to sacrifices, they substituted the victim, or the ram, for Christ, according to what has been stated.

Now there ought to have been in sacrifices the exercise of the duty of repentance: but when they became more and more hardened, and thought that by their ceremonies they obtained a greater license to sin, and that God required no more from them, as though they had settled matters with him, they completely neutralized the design of God: for sacrifices, as it has been already said, had been enjoined for this end, --- that they might exercise penitence.

We now then see that this answer given by Jeremiah was not in vain, --- that their sacrifices did not please God. There is a severer language used elsewhere, --- that God nauseated them, that he was wearied in bearing them, that he was constrained to be troubled with them, while they thus profaned his name. (Isaiah 1:14.) The meaning here is the same, --- that God never required sacrifices for their

own sake, but for another end; and also, that all external rites are of themselves mere trumperies and mockeries, nay, a profanation of God's name; so that they could not pacify him, but, on the contrary, provoke his wrath. It follows ---

Jeremiah 6:21

21. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will lay stumblingblocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish.

21. Propterea sic dicit Jehova, Ecce pono huic populo offendicula, et offendent (nam sunt ab eadem radice et nomen et verbum) patres et filii similiter; vicinus et socius ejus peribunt.

Here God, in plain words, declares what vengeance he would execute on the people. He says first, that he would lay for them stumbling blocks He no doubt compares the judgments which were nigh to nets or traps; for the Jews hoped to escape. He therefore says, that they would be ensnared: ``Wherever ye go, ``he says, ``ye shall meet with those nets by which God will catch you: Fall, therefore, shall both fathers and sons, the neighbor and his friend''

He means by these words, that however they might conspire together, they would yet be exposed to the same punishment. For when sons follow the examples of their fathers, they think themselves innocent; and also when any one has many associates, he thinks himself safe in his licentiousness. As, then, consent or society hardens the ungodly, so that they fear not the wrath of God, the Prophet on this account includes sons with their fathers, and a neighbor with his friend, as those who were to perish together, and without any difference. The word ``stumbling blocks'' is indeed metaphorical; but in the next verse the Prophet speaks without a figure, and says ---

Jeremiah 6:22-23

22. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth.

22. Sic dicit Jehovah, Ecce populus veniet e terra Aquilonis, et gens magna excitabitur e lateribus terrae:

23. They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion.

23. Arcum et hastam (alii vertunt, clypeum) apprehendent; crudeles erunt et non parcent; vox eorum quasi mare tumultuabitur, et super equos ascendent; erunt dispositi sicuti vir ad proelium, super to, filia Sion.

It was no useless repetition when the Prophet said so often that God said. He might have said only, ``Behold, a nation shall come from the north;'' but he premises by saying that he derived this message from God, and not only so, but he introduces God as the speaker, that his message might be more impressive. In the former verse he had also said, Thus saith Jehovah, and elsewhere: but he now repeats the same words, that the holy name of God might more powerfully rouse their minds.

Behold, he says, a people shall come from the land of the north For forty years Jeremiah ceased not to proclaim war against the Jews, and also openly to name their

enemies: we yet see that so much preaching was without fruit. This was dreadful indeed: but we may thus see, as it were in a mirror, how great is our hardness and stupor, and how great is our fury and madness against God. He then designates here the Chaldeans as a northern nation, and says that it was a great nation: and yet he shews, that the Chaldeans would not of themselves come; it shall be roused, he says. This act is to be applied to God; for though ambition and avarice impelled the Chaldeans to lay waste nations and lands far and wide, yet that war was carried on under the guidance of God himself: he armed and impelled the Chaldeans, and used them as the scourges of his wrath. We may learn this from the verb {יעור}, iour, ``shall be roused;'' and he says, from the sides of the earth, [181] for they came from a distant country. But the Prophet means, that there would be nothing to hinder the Chaldeans from entering Judea, and from destroying and putting to flight the people, and from demolishing the city and the temple.

He adds other particulars, in order more fully to render the Chaldeans objects of dread: They shall lay hold, he says, on the bow and the lance They who render the last word shield, do not sufficiently attend to the design of the Prophet. For there is no mention here made of defense; but it is the same as though the Prophet had said, that they would come furnished with bows and spears, that they might shoot at a distance. The word {כידון}, kidun, means a spear and a lance; [182] and it means also a shield: but in this place the Prophet, I doubt not, means a spear; as though he had said, ``They will strike at a distance, or near at hand.''

He afterwards adds, that they would be cruel, according to what Isaiah says, when he speaks of the Persians and Medes,

``They will covet neither gold nor silver,'' (Isaiah 13:17)

and yet they were a rapacious people. This is indeed true; but the Prophet meant both these things, that as the Persians and Medes were to be the executioners of divine vengeance, they would come with a new disposition and character, despising gold and silver, and other kinds of spoil, and seeking only blood. And they will shew, he says, no mercy; and then he adds, their voice shall make an uproar, or sound, like the sea He touches, I have no doubt, on the stupor of the people in not attending to the voice of God; for the teaching of Jeremiah had for many years sounded in their ears: Isaiah and others had preceded him; but the people had continued deaf. He says now, ``Ye shall hereafter hear other teachers; they will not warn you, nor give you counsel, nor be satisfied with reproofs and threatenings, but they will come like a tempest on the sea; their voice shall make an uproar''

He adds, Ascend shall they on horses, [183] and be set in order as a man for war;

[181] The ancient versions render it, “from the end, or ends, or extremities, of the earth.” — Ed.

[182] It is rendered “a spear,“ or a lance, by the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Arabic; but improperly “a shield” by the Vulgate and the Targum. It is not true that it ever means a shield. It was a short spear or javelin. “It is evident,“ says Parkhurst, “that this word signifies neither the larger spear nor the shield, because it is distinguished from both. See 1 Samuel 17:6; 41:45 [sic]; Job 39:23.” — Ed.

[183] Literally it is, “And on horses shall they ride.” Then the following line is, referring to the nation in verse 21, — Set in order it shall be, like a man for war, Against thee, daughter of Sion. Then the next verse refers to the same, the nation, — Heard have we the report of it; Relaxed have become our hands, Distress has laid hold on us, The pain like that of one in travail. The effect is first stated, the relaxation of the hands; then the cause, the distress and anguish they

that is, ``Thou, Jerusalem, shalt find that thou wilt have to do with military men.'' The Prophet means, in short, that the Jews most foolishly trusted in their own strength, and thus heedlessly despised the threatenings of the prophets. But as their security was of this kind, he says that they would at length really find out how stupid they had been, for the Chaldeans would come with dreadful violence, prepared for war --- against whom? Against thee, he says, O daughter of Sion I cannot proceed further, on account of some other business.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cease not daily to give thee occasion of offense, and as thou ceasest not, in order to promote our salvation, to call us to the right way, --- O grant, that we may be attentive to thy voice, and suffer ourselves to be reproved by it, and so submit ourselves to thee, that we may continually go on towards the mark to which thou invitest us, and that having at length finished our course in this life, we may enjoy the fruit of our obedience and faith, and possess that eternal inheritance which has been obtained for us by Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Twenty-Sixth

Jeremiah 6:24

24. We have heard the fame thereof: our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, and pain, as of a woman in travail.

24. Audivimus famam ejus, dissolutae sunt manus nostrae, angustia apprehendit nos, dolor tanquam parturientis.

Jeremiah proceeds in the same strain; for he sets before the eyes of the Jews the judgment of God, and draws them, as it were against their will, into the middle of the scene. And this was done by the prophets, as it has been already said, because by plain words they could not move the hearts of the people on account of their contempt of God, and of the long obduracy in which they had settled. Hence he says, that heard had been the report of the enemy, and that immediately dissolved had their hands When the Prophet spoke, the Jews did not think that their enemies were so near. But the phrase is to be thus explained: ``As soon as ye shall hear the report, your hands shall be relaxed, and lay hold on you shall distress.''

The similitude of a woman in travail is often found in Scripture; and what is to be understood in most places is sudden and unexpected pain: but in this place the Prophet refers rather to the violence of pain; though the other meaning, which I have just stated, is not to be excluded; for it is probable, that when he saw that the hardness and obstinacy of the people were so great, he adopted this similitude, in order to shew, that however heedlessly they despised the punishment due to them, it could not yet be avoided, as it would seize them suddenly like that of a woman in childbearing. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 6:25

25. Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy and fear is on every side.

25. Ne exieritis in agrum, et per iter ne ingrediamini; quia gladius hostis, terror undique (vel, in circuitu, {מסביב}.)

felt. — Ed.

He confirms the previous verse. For the Jews, as it has been said, regarded all threatenings as nothing: it was hence necessary that they should be taught, not by words only, but be constrained to fear, by having the scene set before their eyes, that being thus constrained they might at least entertain some fear on account of the nearness of God's vengeance. The Prophet then denounces war, and speaks as though they were already besieged, Go ye not forth, he says, into the field, etc., for the terror of the enemy and fear is on every side; [184] not that the Chaldeans were already laying waste Judea, or that they had even departed from their own country. But we have briefly explained the design of the Prophet: he intended thus vehemently to deal with a hardened and obstinate people, that they might know that he spoke seriously to them, and that his threatenings would not be evanescent. It follows ---

Jeremiah 6:26

26. O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us.

26. Filia populi mei, accingere sacco, voluta to in pulvere, luctum unigeniti fac tibi, planctum amaritudinum; quia repente veniet vastator super nos.

The Prophet seems to use more words than necessary; for in a clear matter he appears to extend his discourse too far: but we must consider the design which has been mentioned; for he could not rouse the Jews without urging the matter on them with great vehemence. Known and sufficiently common is the term, ``daughter of my people, ``as applied to the whole community. Daughter of my people, he says, be thou girded with sackcloth, and roll thyself in the dust It is doubtful whether the Prophet exhorts them to repent, or whether he denounces mourning on the irreclaimable and the hopeless; for ashes and sackcloth are often mentioned, when there is no hope of conversion or of repentance. However, if this view be approved, I will not object, that is, that the Prophet still makes the trial, whether the Jews would return to a sane mind.

Make thee a mourning, he says, as for an only-begotten Thus the Hebrews speak of the greatest and bitterest mourning: for when any one loses an only son, he grieves far more for his death than if he had many children; for when some remain, some comfort still remains; but when one is wholly bereaved, a greater grief, as I have said, is felt by parents. For this reason the Hebrews call it a mourning for an only son, when things are in a hopeless state. He afterwards adds, the mourning of bitternesses, signifying the same thing; because suddenly shall come upon us the waster

If repentance be thought to be intended here, we know that sackcloth and ashes are, of themselves, of no account before God, but that they were formerly evidences of repentance when God's wrath was humbly deprecated; and hence the prophets

[184] This is addressed to the daughter of Sion: hence the verbs are in the singular number. There is no need for the change which Calvin, and also Blayney, adopt, though countenanced by the Keri, and some MSS., for the same is addressed in the next verse, — Go thou not forth to the field, And in the way walk not; For the enemy has a sword, Terror is on every side. "For the enemy," etc., literally, "For sword is to the enemy." — Ed.

often designated the thing signified by the sign. We must yet remember what Joel says, that hearts, and not garments, are to be rent. (Joel 2:13.) But the prophets assume this principle as granted, that we are not to deal falsely with God, but with sincerity. Then by sackcloth and ashes they did not understand false protestations, as it is said, but real manifestations of what they felt, when really and from the heart they sought God's mercy. But as the Prophet seems here to assume the character of a herald, denouncing war, I know not whether repentance is what is here meant. So then I rather understand him as saying, that nothing but extreme mourning remained for the Jews: and hence he says, that destroyers would suddenly come upon them; for they had for many years so misused the forbearance of God, that they thought that they could sin with impunity. As, then, they had long indulged this false confidence, the Prophet made use of this word, ``suddenly,'' {פתאם}, petam He adds ---

Jeremiah 6:27

27. I have set thee for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way.

27. Arcem posui to in populo meo, munitionem (vel, propagnaculum) ut cognoscas et probes vias ipsorum (viam ipsorum.)

The Prophet says, that he was set by God as a watchtower, which was also fortified, that he might observe the wickedness of the people. In order to gain more authority for his prophecy, he introduces God as the speaker. He had spoken hitherto in his own person; but now God himself comes forth, and says, I have made thee a citadel. Jerome renders the last word ``probation.'' The verb {בחן}, becken, means to prove; and Jeremiah uses the verb in this verse, ``that thou mayest prove their way.'' But as the word {מבצר}, mebezar, ``fortress, ``follows, we cannot take the word here otherwise than as meaning a citadel or rampart. I therefore have no doubt but that a citadel for watching is what is meant; as though God had said, that his Prophet was like a watchtower, from which might be seen at one glance whatever was done far and wide: for we cannot see far from a plain, but they who are located high can see to a great distance.

But the word fortress is also added: for it behooved Jeremiah to watch without fear, and not to be exposed to the threats, calumnies, or clamors of the people. Jeremiah intimates that two things are required in God's servants, even knowledge and undaunted courage; for it was not enough for the prophets to see clearly what was needful, except they were firmly prepared to discharge their office. Both these things seem to be included, when he says, that he was set as a watchtower, and also as a fortress

Why was he thus set? That thou mayest know, he says, and prove their way Let us now see what was the intention of this. The Prophet no doubt here claims power and credit to himself, that he might not only freely but authoritatively reprove the people: for objections, we know, were ever in their mouths, that they might be at liberty to despise the Prophet's teaching, as though it did not proceed from God. This then was the reason why God here declares that Jeremiah was like a citadel, and that a fortified one; he was made so, that he might observe and know the way of the

people. Hence it followed, that however obstinately they might defend themselves, it availed them nothing; for Jeremiah was endued with the highest authority, even that which was divine, in order to perform his office of a judge in condemning them: for it immediately follows ---

Jeremiah 6:28

28. They are all grievous revolters, walking with slanders: they are brass and iron; they are all corrupters.

28. Omnes perversi perversorum ambulantes in obtrectatione (dicemus postea de hac voce;) aes (aut, chalybs, ut alii vertunt,) vel ferrum; omnes perditores (vel, corruptores) sunt.

The Prophet now shews what he found the Jews to be, whose manners and proceedings he had been commanded to observe. Had he said this at first, either the fury of the people would have been kindled, or his judgment would have been treated with contempt: but when God shewed what he had known through his servant, it had more weight, and then the fury of the people was also repressed, when they understood that it would avail them nothing to fight against God.

He says, that they were all the apostates of apostates, or the transgressors of transgressors. Some read {סרי}, sari, with a {ש}, shin, and render the words, ``the princes of transgressors.'' But I adopt the first as the more approved reading. They who read ``princes, ``elicit a meaning from the words which appears strange, but not the true one: they say that they were the princes of transgressors, because the people were no better than their rulers, and because servants imitated their masters in all kinds of wickedness. But this, as all must see, is a strained meaning. Why then should anything be changed, since the sentence, as it is, has a most suitable meaning? They are then called the apostates of apostates, or the transgressors of transgressors, {סררים} {סרי}, sari sarerim The Hebrews, we know, express the superlative degree by doubling the word, as, the heaven of heavens, the holy of holies, the God of gods. He then says, that they were not only wicked, but most wicked, who had reached the extreme point of depravity. For when impiety reaches its summit, then justly may men be called the apostates of apostates. This, I have no doubt, is what the Prophet means.

He afterwards adds, that they walked in slander The same mode of speaking, if I mistake not, is found in Leviticus 19:16,

``Go not,'' or walk not, ``among thy people with slander.''

Yet this phrase may be otherwise explained, that is, that they walked in calumnies, or that they perverted everything. But in this place, the word slander, seems too feeble, as the Prophet, in my judgment, means more, even the audacity of the people, so that they allowed themselves every liberty in sinning, and thus walked in their own wickedness.

He adds, Brass and iron [185] Many render the words, ``Brass mixed with iron;'' that is, that the noble and the vulgar were mingled together, so that there was a common consent among them. Of this meaning I do not wholly disapprove: but as

[185] "Their impudence resembles brass, and their obstinacy may be compared to iron." — Lowth.

it is rather refined, I know not whether it be well --- founded. I therefore prefer to regard this as designating their hardness: They were like brass and iron, for they were inflexible. The Prophet then after having called them transgressors who had alienated themselves from God, and after having said, that they walked in their own depravity, now adds, that they were untamable, not capable of any improvements; and hence he compares them to brass and iron.

He at last adds, that they were all corrupters This, as I think, is to be referred to their habits: for thus are enemies called, who plunder everything, and commit all excesses. But they are corrupters here, who not only like thieves plunder the goods of all, but who are leaders to others in wickedness: so that all things were in confusion, as it is wont to be said, from the head to the feet. [186] He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 6:29

29. The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain: for the wicked are not plucked away.

29. Exaruit (consumptum est) sufflatorium (vel, follis) ab igne; integrum plumbum, frustra conflavit conflator (vel, excoxit excoctor) quia (nam copula hic pro causali particula ponitur, quia) mali non sunt purgati (vel, et, tamen adversative, non sunt consumpti; uterque sensus non male quadrabit.)

He says, that the bellows was consumed by the fire and without any advantage. The whole sentence is metaphorical. Interpreters refer it simply to what was taught; and hence they consider the mouth of the Prophet to be the bellows, by which the fire was kindled. So the meaning would be, --- that the Prophet was as it were burnt, through his incessant crying, like the bellows, which by being continually used is at length consumed, especially when the fire burns fiercely. They then suppose that the Prophet complains that his throat had dried up, like the bellows, which being burnt by the fire can no longer do its work. But what if we refer this to the punishments and judgments by which God had chastised his people, and yet without benefit? For so he complains in the first chapter of Isaiah, and in other places.

``In vain, ``he says, ``have I chastised thee:''

[186] This verse and the preceding have been amended, and for the most part conjecturally, by Blayney, and though with the approbation of Horsley, yet with no satisfactory reasons. That the Prophet was made as it were a fortress, appears from Jeremiah 1:18: and there is here an evident allusion to that, though his being made a watchtower, or a watchman occupying such a place, was for a different purpose. The two verses I thus render, — 27. A watchtower have I given thee among my people, A fortress, that thou mightest know and try their way; Then we are told what he had found them to be, — All of them are the apostates of apostates, Companions of the slanderer; Brass and iron are all of them, Corrupted are they. “The apostates of apostates,” mean thorough, confirmed apostates, as “servant of servants” means the basest: “companions,” etc., is literally, “Walkers with,“ etc. “All of them,“ clearly belong to “Brass and iron,“ as “they” follows “corrupted.” The ancient versions are not satisfactory, and the Targum is paraphrastic; but they give the general meaning. “Prover” or “examiner” is what the versions give for “watchtower.” “Fortress” is omitted in the Septuagint, the Arabic, and the Targum, and is rendered “strong” by the Vulgate “The apostates” is left out by the Septuagint and the Arabic, and is rendered “princes” by the Vulgate, Syriac, and the Targum For “companions of the slanderer,“ the Septuagint and Arabic have “walking perversely — {σκολιῶς};'' the Syriac and Targum, ``walking with guile --- cum dolo;'' and the Vulgate, ``walking fraudulently --- fraudulenter.'' The word ,{רכיל} ``slanderer'' is found in five other places, Leviticus 19:16; Proverbs 11:13; 20:19; Jeremiah 9:4; Ezekiel 22:9. In the first three passages it is rendered in our version ``a talebearer,`` but more correctly, a slanderbearer, or, as Parkhurst renders it, ``a trader in slander.'' It does not mean ``a sharper,`` as Blayney thinks. The passages in Proverbs are inconsistent with such an idea. There is no passage where it may not be rendered ``a slanderer,`` except Ezekiel 22:9; where it evidently means ``slander.'' --- Ed

and Jeremiah has before said,

``In vain have I chastised my children; they have not received correction.'' (Jeremiah 2:30)

So also it is said by Isaiah,

``Alas! vengeance must I take on my enemies,'' (Isaiah 1:24)

but to what purpose? He afterwards adds, that it was without any benefit, because their wickedness was incurable.

The first meaning, however, is not to be rejected, for it was not unsuitable to say, that the tongue of the Prophet was worn out with constant crying, that his throat was nearly dried up. But I approve more of what I have just stated. Let each make his own choice. If we consider prophetic teaching to be here intended, we may also draw another meaning, --- that the Prophet's mouth was consumed by God's terrors; for it was like burning, whenever God threatened the people with final destruction. The Prophet then does not without reason say, that his throat was burnt by fire, even the threatenings of God.

He afterwards adds, that the lead was entire This sentence rather favors the view, that Jeremiah is speaking of the judgments by which God sought to humble the people and to lead them to repentance; for it cannot be suitably applied to doctrine or teaching, that the lead was unmixt. By lead I understand dross. Some consider it to be silver, and say that lead was mixed with silver, in order that the silver might more easily be melted. As I am not skillful in that art, I cannot say whether this is done or not. But the Prophet says that the lead was unmixt; that is, that nothing was found but dross and filth.

He then adds, In vain has the melter melted, for evils have not been purged away; that is, the dross had not been removed so as to leave behind the pure metal. He means, in short, that there was nothing but dross and filth in the people, and not a particle of pure silver. It hence followed, that they had been as it were in vain melted. Now, this applies more fitly to punishment than to teaching, as all must see. I hence do not doubt but that the Prophet shews here, that the Jews were not only wicked and apostates and despisers of God, but were also so obstinate that God had often tried in vain to purify them. And it is a kind of speaking, we know, which occurs often in the prophets and throughout Scripture, that God is said to melt, to purge, to refine men, when he chastises them. But the Prophet says that there was only filth in that people, that lead was found, and that they were not melted. And hence we learn how great was their hardness: though they were tried by fire, they yet melted not, but continued in their perverseness. [187] He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 6:30

30. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the LORD hath rejected them.

30. Argentum reprobatum (contemptibile) vocarunt [188] ipsos (hoc est, vocabunt:)

[187] The true reading of the third word in this verse is {{מאש ,{תם according to the Keri, many MSS., the Septuagint and the Vulgate; and sometimes{תם} means ``consumed.'' Pliny says that they formerly used lead to separate the dross from the silver, as they use quicksilver now. Then the verse is to be thus rendered, --- Burnt has been the bellows by the fire, Consumed has been the lead; In vain has been the melting of the melted, For their evils have not been separated. They had been in the furnace, but the lead intended to separate the dross from the silver, was consumed, and the melting did not succeed, for their evils, or their vices, were not separated from them. Hence in the next verse they are called reprobate silver. --- Ed.

[188] The ancient versions, except the Syriac, render this in the imperative mood, “vocate —

quia sprevit (vel, reprobavit) ipsos Jehova.

Jeremiah concludes his subject by saying, --- that if the Jews had been cast a hundred times into the furnace, they would not be improved, as they would never become softened on account of their hopeless obstinacy. He uses the word silver, by way of concession; for they were not worthy of that name, and we have already seen that there was nothing soft or tender in them.

But the prophets often conceded some things to hypocrites; yet not without some appearance of a taunt, as the case seems to be here. The Jews wished to be regarded as silver, and to appear as such: ``Let them then be silver, ``that is, ``Let them claim the name, by boasting themselves as the holy seed of Abraham; but they are a reprobate silver;'' according to what we say, Faux or faux argent; which yet is neither silver nor gold; but the words are used not in their strict meaning, and we afterwards shew that what we have so called is not silver. Even so does the Prophet say, ``They are silver in their own esteem, and take pride in the title: but they are a reprobate silver.'' How so? For Jehovah has rejected them He shews that it belongs to God to pronounce sentence on men, and that they gain nothing by their vain flatteries, and by securing some esteem in the world: for God alone is the true judge. The Prophet then shews that the Jews were a reprobate silver, in order that they might know that they in vain gloried, while they boasted themselves to be God's people and heritage. Now follows ---

call ye them." So also the Targum, and Blayney has adopted the same, — Reprobate silver call ye them, For reprobated (or, rejected) them has Jehovah. — Ed.

Chapter 7

CHAPTER 7

Jeremiah 7:1-4

1. The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,

1. Sermo qui datus fuit Jeremiae (qui factus fuit ad Jeremiam, qui datus fuit, ad verbum) a Jehova, dicendo,

2. Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord

2. Sta in porta domus Jehovae (hoc est, Templum,) et clama illic hunc sermonem (hoc est, vociferare hunc sermonem, vel, cum clamore prefer,) et dicas, Audite sermonem Jehovae cunctus Jehudah, qui ingredimini per has portas, ut adoretis Jehovam:

3. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

3. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Bonas facite vias vestras et studia vestra, et habitabo vobiscum in hoc loco;

4. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these.

4. Ne confidatis vobis (hoc est, ne vobis fiduciam ponatis, vel, adjiciatis vobis fiduciam) ad verba mendacii, dicendo, Templum Jehovae, Templum Jehovae, Templum Jehovae sunt.

Here the Prophet gives a short account of the sermon, in which he severely reproved the people, because his labor had been useless, though he had sharply and severely reproved them. He says then, that he had a command from above to stand at the gate of the Temple. This was indeed usually done by the prophets: but God seems to have intended that this reproof should be heard by all. He says further, that he was commanded to address the whole tribe of Judah

It is hence probable, and what may be easily concluded, that this discourse was delivered on a feast --- day, when there was the usual assembly of the people. He could not indeed have made this address on other days; for then the inhabitants of the city only frequented the Temple. But on the feast --- days they usually came from the neighboring towns and from the whole country to celebrate God's rightful worship, which had been prescribed in the law. Since then Jeremiah addressed the whole tribe of Judah, we hence conclude, that he spoke not only to the inhabitants of the city, but also to the whole tribe, which came together to keep the feast --- day.

Now the object of his sermon was, to exhort them seriously to repent, if they wished God to be reconciled to them. So the Prophet shews, that God did not regard their sacrifices and external rites, and that this was not the way, as they thought, of appeasing him. For after they had celebrated the feast, every one returned home, as though they all, after having made an expiation, had God propitious to them. The Prophet shews here, that the way of worshipping God was very different, which was to reform their lives.

Make good, he says, your ways and your doings, then will I dwell in this place [189] This promise contains an implied contrast; for the Prophet intimates, that the people would not long survive, unless they sought in another way to pacify God. ``I will dwell, ``he seems to say, --- in this place, when your life is changed.'' It then follows on the other hand, ``God will drive you into exile, except you change your life: in vain then do you seek a quiet and happy state through offering your sacrifices. God indeed esteems as nothing this external worship, except it be preceded by inward sincerity, unless integrity of life accompanies your profession.'' This is one thing.

Then the Prophet comes closer to them when he says, Trust ye not in words of falsehood. For had not this been expressly said, the Jews might, according to their usual way, have found out some evasion: ``Have we then lost all our labor in celebrating our festivals with so much diligence, in leaving our homes and families to present ourselves before God? We have spared no expense, we have brought sacrifices and spent our money; and is all this of no value before God?'' For hypocrites always magnify their trumperies, as we find in the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah, where they expostulated with God, as though he were unkind to them, ``We have from day to day sought the Lord.'' To this the Lord answered, ``In vain ye seek me from day to day and search for my ways.'' Hence the Lord disregarded that diligence with which hypocrites sought to render him propitious without real sincerity of heart. It is for the same purpose that the Prophet now adds, Trust ye not, etc. It is an anticipation in order to prevent them from making their usual objection, ``What then? Has the Temple been built in vain?'' But he says, ``Is not God worshipped here in vain? They are words of falsehood, when religious sincerity is absent.''

We hence see that external rites are here repudiated, when men seek in a false way to gain favor before God, and seek to redeem their sins by false compensations,

[189] Though the ancient versions, except the Vulgate, render the verb to dwell, as an Hiphil, "cause to dwell," as in our version, yet Blayney, as well as Calvin, follows the Vulgate, "And I will dwell with you in this place:" which seems more accordant with the context. Their boast was that God was dwelling with them, as the temple was his temple. Then when Shiloh, in Jeremiah 7:12, is referred to, God says that he set his name there: and no doubt the same thing is meant here. — Ed.

while yet their hearts continue perverse. This truth might be enlarged upon, but as it often occurs in the prophets, I only notice it shortly. It is enough to regard the main point, --- that while the Jews were satisfied with the Temple, the ceremonies and the sacrifices, they were self --- deceivers, for their boasting was fallacious: ``the words of falsehood'' are to be taken as meaning that false and vain glorying in which the Jews indulged, while they sought to ward off God's vengeance by external rites, and at the same time made no effort to return into favor by ameliorating their life.

With regard to the expressions The Temple, etc., some explain them thus, --- they were ``words of falsehood, ``when they said that they came to the Temple; and so the supplement is, ``when they said that they came, ``for the pronoun demonstrative is plural. [190] Hence they understand this of the people; not that the Jews called themselves the Temple of God, but that they boasted that they came to the Temple and there worshipped God. But I rather agree with others, who explain this of the three parts of the Temple. There was, we know, the court, then the Temple, and, lastly, the interior part, the Holy of holies, where was the Ark of the Covenant. The prophets often speak of the Temple only; but when they spoke distinctly of the form of the Temple, they mentioned the court, as I have said, where the people usually offered their sacrifices, and then the holy place, into which the priests entered alone; and, lastly, the secret place, which was more hidden, and was called the Holy of holies. It seems then that this passage of the Prophet is to be understood as meaning that the people said that the court, the Temple, and the interior part, were the Temples of God, as though they had a triple Temple.

But we must observe the design of the Prophet, which interpreters have omitted. The Prophet then made this repetition especially, because the Temple was as it were a triple defense to hypocrites, like a city, which, when surrounded, not by one, but by three walls, is deemed impregnable. Since, then, the Jews exalted their Temple, consisting of three parts, it was the same as they set up a triple wall or a triple rampart against God's judgments! ``We are invincible; how can enemies come to us? how can any calamity reach us? God dwells in the midst of us, and here he has his habitation, and not one and single fort, but a triple fort; he has his court, his Temple, and his Holy of holies.'' We now then understand why the Prophet made this repetition, and used also the plural number.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we so abuse thy forbearance, that thou art constrained by our depravity to deal sharply with us, --- O grant, that we may not be also

[190] The difficulty in the construction is removed by Blayney, who renders {{דברי as a participle, as it is in some other places, Psalm 5:6: Psalm 38:3; Psalm 63:11. His version is, --- Trust ye not in those who speak falsehood, saying, --- The Temple of Jehovah, the Temple of Jehovah, The Temple of Jehovah, are these. The Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Arabic, have ``the Temple of the Lord'' only twice, and the verb is in the singular number, ``The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord it is.'' The verb is the same in the Vulgate, only the words, as in Hebrew, and also in the Targum, are repeated thrice. The paraphrase of the latter is rather singular, --- ``Trust not in the words of the prophets of falsehood, who say, Before the Temple of the Lord ye worship, before the Temple of the Lord ye sacrifice, before the Temple of the Lord ye offer praise; three times a year ye appear before him.'' ``These'' mean, as Gataker thinks, these places or buildings; and Lowth and Blayney think the same. The repetition seems to denote the frequency with which the Jews used the words: they continually boasted of having God's Temple among them. ``The Prophet,`` says Henry, ``repeats it, because they repeated it upon all occasions. It was the cant of the times. If they heard an awakening sermon, they lulled themselves asleep again with this, `We cannot but do well, for we have the Temple of the Lord among us.' It is common for those that are farthest from God to boast themselves most of their being near to the Church.'' --- Ed.

hardened against thy chastisements, but may we with a submissive and tractable neck learn to take thy yoke, and be so obedient to thy government, that we may testify our repentance, not for one day only, and give no fallacious evidence, but that we may really prove through the whole course of our life the sincerity of our conversion to thee, by regarding this as our main object, even to glorify thee in Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Twenty-Seventh

Jeremiah 7:5-7

5. For if ye throughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye throughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour;

5. Certe si bonas faciendo bonas feceritis vias vestras (bonificando bonificaveritis, ad verbum, si ita vertere liceret) et studia vestra; si faciendo feceritis judicium inter virum et inter proximum ejus;

6 If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt:

6. Peregrinum, pupillum et viduam non oppresseritis; et sanguinem innoxium non effuderitis in hoc loco; et post deos alienos non ambulaveritis in malum vobis (in malum vestrum;)

7. Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.

7. Tunc habitare faciam vos in hoc loco, in terra quam dedi patribus vestris, a seculo usque in seculum.

Interpreters do not agree as to the meaning of this passage. Some render {כי} {אם}, ki am, ``But rather, ``or, ``But.'' I indeed allow that it is so taken in many places; but they are mistaken who read {אם} {כי}, ki am, as one word; for the Prophet, on the contrary, repeats what he had said, and that is, that God would not be propitious to the Jews except their life proved that they had really repented. The words are sometimes taken as one in Hebrew, and mean ``but;'' yet in other places they are often taken as separate words, as we found in the second chapter, ``Though thou washest thyself with nitre;'' and for the sake of emphasis the particle ``surely, ``is put before ``though.'' But in this place the Prophet simply means, that the Jews were deceived in seeking to prescribe a law for God according to their own will, as it belongs only to him either to approve or to reject their works. And this meaning is confirmed by the latter part of the verse, for we read not there {אם} {כי}, ki am, but {אם}, am; ``If by doing ye shall do judgment;'' and then in the same form he adds, ``If ye will not oppress the stranger, the orphan, and the widow;'' and at last he adds, ``Then (a copulative I allow is here, but it is to be taken as an adverb) I will make you to dwell in this place.''

The purport of the whole is, --- that sacrifices are of no importance or value before God, unless those who offer them wholly devote themselves to God with a sincere heart. The Jews sought to bind God as it were by their own laws: he shews that he was thus impiously put under restraint. He therefore lays down a condition, as though he had said, ``it belongs to me to prescribe to you what is right. Away, then, with your ceremonies, by which ye think to expiate your sins; for I regard them not,

and esteem them as nothing.'' What then is to be done? He now shews then, ``If you will rightly order your life, ye shall dwell in this place.''

For yesterday the Prophet exhorted the people to repent; and he employed the sentiment which he now repeats. He commanded the people to come to God with an upright and pure mind; he afterwards added another sentence, ``Trust not in words of falsehood, saying, The Temple of the Lord, ``etc. He now again repeats what he had said, ``If ye will make your ways good.'' He shews now more clearly that no wrong was done to the people when God repudiated their ceremonies; for he required a pure heart, and external rites without repentance are vain and useless. This then is what the Prophet had in view: ``Though God seems to treat you with great severity, he yet promises to be kind to you, if you order your lives according to his law: is this unjust? Can the condition which is proposed to you by God be liable to any calumnies, as though God treated you cruelly!'' This then is the meaning of the Prophet.

If ye will make good your ways, that is, if your life be amended; and if ye will do judgment, etc. He now comes to particulars; and first he addresses the judges, whose duty it was to render to every one his right, to redress injuries, to pronounce what was just and right when any contention arose. If then, he says, ye will do justice between a man and his neighbor, that is, if your judgments be right, without favor or hatred, and if no bribes lead you from what is right and just, while pronouncing judgment on a case between a man and his brother.

Then he adds, if ye will not oppress the stranger and the orphan and the widow This also belonged to the judges: but God no doubt shews here generally, that injustice greatly prevailed among the people, as he condemns the cruelty and perfidy of the judges themselves.

As to strangers and orphans and widows, they are often mentioned; for strangers as well as orphans and widows were almost destitute of protection, and were subject to many wrongs, as though they were exposed as a prey. Hence, whenever a right government is referred to, God mentions strangers and orphans and widows; for it might hence be easily understood of what kind was the public administration of justice; for when others obtain their right, it is no matter of wonder, since they have advocates to defend their cause, and they have also the aid of friends. Thus every one who defends his own cause, obtains at least some portion of his right. But when strangers and orphans and widows are not unjustly dealt with, it is an evidence of real integrity; for we may hence conclude, that there is no respect of persons among the judges. But as this subject has been handled elsewhere, I only touch on it lightly here.

And if ye will not shed, he says, innocent blood in this place Here the Prophet accuses the judges of a more heinous crime, and calls them murderers. They had, however, no doubt some plausible pretences for shedding the blood of the innocent. But the Prophet, speaking here in the name of God and by the dictates of his Spirit, overlooks all these as altogether vain, though the judges might have thought them sufficient excuses. By saying, in this place, he shews how foolish was their confidence in boasting of God's worship, sacrifices, and Temple, while yet they had

polluted the Temple with their cruel murders. [191]

He then passes to the first table of the law, If ye will not walk after foreign gods to your evil By stating a part for the whole, he condemns every kind of impiety: for what is it to walk after alien gods but to depart from the pure and legitimate worship of the true God and to corrupt it with superstitions? We see then what the Prophet means: he recalls the Jews to the duty of observing the law, that they might thereby give a veritable evidence of their repentance: ``Prove, ``he says, ``that you have repented from the heart.'' He shews how they were to prove this, even by observing the law of God. And, as I have said, he refers to the first Table by stating a part for the whole. As to the second Table, he mentions some particulars which were intended to shew that they violated justice and equity, and also that cruelty and perfidiousness, frauds and rapines, prevailed greatly among them.

Then follows the latter part, Then I will make you to dwell, [192] etc. God sets this clause in opposition to the false confidence of the people, as though he had said, ``Ye wish me to be propitious to you; but mock me not by offering sacrifices without sincerity of heart, without a devout feeling; be consistent; and think not that I am pacified by you, when ye come to the Temple with empty display, and pollute your sacrifices with impure hands. I therefore do not allow this state of things; but if ye come on the condition of returning into favor with me, then I will make you to dwell in this place and in the land which I gave to your fathers.'' The last part of the verse, from age to age, ought to be connected with the verb, ``I will make you to dwell, ``{שכנתי}, shekanti, ``I will make you to dwell from age to age, ``that is, As your fathers dwelt formerly in this land, so shall you remain quiet in the same, and there shall be to you a peaceable possession; but not in any other place. We must bear in mind the contrast which I noticed yesterday; for he indirectly denounces exile on the Jews, because they had contaminated the land by their vices, and gloried only in their sacrifices. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 7:8

8. Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit.

8. Ecce, vos fiduciam adjicitis ad verba mendacii (vel, fiduciam vobis ponitis super verbis mendacii,) quae profectu carent.

He again teaches what we observed yesterday, --- that the glorying of the Jews was foolish, while they boasted of the Temple and of their sacrifices to God. He calls their boastings the words of falsehood, as we have explained, because they wholly turned to a contrary end what God had instituted. It was his will that sacrifices should be offered to him in the Temple --- to what purpose? To preserve unity of faith among the whole people. And sacrifices, what was their design? To shew the people that they deserved eternal death, and also that they were to flee to God for mercy, there being no other expiation but the blood of Christ. But there was no repentance, they were not sorry for their sins; nay, as we shall presently see, they took liberty to indulge more in them on account of their ceremonies, which yet ought

[191] What is to be understood by innocent blood in not only murder, nor principally; but the offering of innocent infants to Moloch, referred to in the 31st verse of this chapter. — Ed.

[192] Calvin departs here from his former rendering in verse 3d. The words mean the same, “Then will I dwell with you.” So the Vulgate. — Ed.

to have been the means of leading them to repentance. They were then the words of falsehood when they separated the signs from their ends. The reality and the sign ought indeed to be distinguished the one from the other; but it is an intolerable divorce, when men lay hold on naked signs and overlook the reality. There was in the sacrifices the reality which I have now mentioned: they were reminded by the spectacle that they were worthy of eternal death; and then, they were to exercise penitence, and thus to flee to God's mercy. As there was no account made of Christ, no care for repentance, no sorrow for sins, no fear of God, no humility, it was an impious separation of what ought to have been united.

We now then more clearly see why the Prophet designates as words of falsehood, that false glorying in which hypocrites indulge, in opposition to God, when they would have him satisfied with naked ceremonies. Hence he adds, that they were words that could not profit, as though he had said, ``As ye seek to trifle with God, so he will also frustrate your design.'' It is indeed certain that they dealt dishonestly with God, when they attempted to satisfy his judgment by frigid ceremonies. He therefore shews that a reward was prepared for them; for they would at length find, that no fruit would come from their false dealings. It follows ---

Jeremiah 7:9-11

9. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;

9. An furari, occidere, adulterium committere, jurare falso (hoc est, pejerare) suffitum offerre Baal, ambulare post deos alienos, quos non cognoscitis?

10. And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?

10. Et venientes et stantes coram facie mea in domo hac (hoc est, in hoc templo,) super quam (vel, super quod) invocatum est nomen meum, dicetis, Liberati sumus ad faciendum (ut faciamus) omnes abominationes istas.

11. Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.

11. An spelunca latronum facta est domus haec (vel, templum hoc,) super quam invocatum est nomen meum, in oculis vestris? Etiam ego ecce video, dicit Jehova.

The meaning seems to be suspended in the first verse, when he says, Whether to steal, to kill, and to commit adultery, etc.; but there is nothing ambiguous in the passage. For though there is something abrupt in the words, we yet infer this to be the meaning, ``Will you steal, ``etc.? Verbs in the infinitive mood, we know, are often to be considered as verbs in the future tense: ``Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, burn incense to Baal, ``etc.? The Prophet shews how foolishly the Jews sought to make an agreement with God, so that they might with impunity provoke him by their many vices. When they entered the Temple, they thought him to be under a necessity to receive them, as though that was a proper reconciliation. But the Prophet exposes this folly. For what can be more absurd than that God should allow men to commit murders, thefts, and adulteries, with impunity? Hypocrites do not in words express this; but when they make external ceremonies a sort of expiation, and seek by such means to bury their sins, do they not make God their

associate? Do they not make him a partaker, as it were, with them, when they would have him to cover their adulteries? When they take sacrifices from their plunders, to expiate their crimes, do they not make him a participator in their robberies? The Prophet, therefore, plainly condemns hypocrites in this place, because they acted most contumeliously towards God, in implicating him in their own vices, as though he was the associate of thieves, murderers, and adulterers.

Will you steal, he says, and then, will you kill, commit adultery, and swear falsely? These four sins are against the Second Table, in which God forbids us to steal, to kill, to commit adultery, and to deceive our neighbors by false swearing. These four vices are mentioned, in order that the Prophet might shew that all the duties of love were wholly disregarded by the Jews. He then adds things which belong to the First Table, even the offering of incense to Baal, and the walking after alien gods, which yet were unknown to them. By these two clauses he proves their impiety. He mentions one kind of idolatry, --- that they offered incense to Baal. The Prophets often refer in the plural number to Baalim, regarded by the Jews as advocates, by whose intercession, as they thought, they gained favor with God; as the case is at this day under the Papacy, whose Baalim are angels and dead men: for they regard them not as gods, but think that by employing these as advocates they conciliate God, and obtain his favor. Such was the superstition which prevailed among the Jews. But the Prophet here includes all idols under the word Baal. There is afterwards a general complaint, --- that God was neglected, and that they had perfidiously departed from him, for they walked after alien gods; and he exaggerates the crime by saying that they were unknown

The Prophet, no doubt, intimates here a contrast with the sure knowledge, which is the basis of true religion: for God had given evident proofs of his glorious power by many miracles, when the Israelites were redeemed; and he had afterwards confirmed the same by many blessings; and the law had been proclaimed, accompanied with many signs and wonders. (Exodus 20:18; Deuteronomy 5:22, 23.) Hence the Jews could not have pleaded involuntary error, for after so many proofs there could have been no excuse on the ground of ignorance. Now, as to alien gods, how came they to know that they were gods? There was no proof, they had no reason to believe them to be so. We hence see how grievously wicked were the Jews; for they had departed from the worship of the true God, who had made himself known to them by many miracles, and who had confirmed the authority of his law, so that it could not be questioned, and they had gone after unknown gods!

The Prophet now adds, Ye come, that is, after ye have allowed yourselves to steal, and to murder, and to commit adultery, and to corrupt the whole worship of God, --- at last, Ye come and stand before me in this temple. God proceeds with the same subject; for it was not only his purpose in this place to condemn the Jews as murderers, and thieves, and adulterers, but he proceeds farther, even to shew their shameless effrontery in coming with an unblushing front and entering the Temple, as though they were the true worshippers of God. ``What do you mean, ``he says, ``by this? Ye bring with you murders, and thefts, and adulteries, and abominable filth; ye are contaminated with the most disgraceful things: by and bye ye enter the

Temple, and think that you are at liberty to do anything.'' Similar is the language we find in the first chapter of Isaiah, verses 12 and 15 (Isaiah 1:12, 15): God complains there that they trod the pavement of his Temple, and brought hands polluted with blood. So also in this place, Ye come, he says, intimating his detestation, and ye stand before me in this Temple Though God was not inclosed in that Temple, yet we know that the Ark of the Covenant was the symbol of his presence. Hence, we often meet in the law with this expression, ``Ye shall stand before me.'' Here then, God shews that it was a detestable and monstrous thing, that the Jews dared to rush into his presence, when polluted and contaminated with so many vices.

And he adds, In this house, on which is called my name, that is, which has been dedicated to me; for to call God's name on the Temple, means nothing else, but that the Temple was consecrated to him, so that he was there worshipped. When God is truly worshipped, they who seek him find that he himself is present by his grace and power. As then God had commanded the Temple to be built for him, that he might there be worshipped, he says his name was there called, that is, according to its first and sacred appointment. Absurdly indeed did the Jews call on his name, for there was in them no religion, no piety: but according to God's institution, his name was called upon in the Temple, as he had consecrated it to himself. Hence God reminds them of the first institution, which was holy and ought to have continued inviolable: ``Know ye not, that this place has been chosen by me, that my name might be there invoked? Ye stand before me in the holy place, and ye stand polluted; and though polluted, not with one kind of vices, but my whole law has been violated by you, and my Tables despised, ye yet stand!'' We hence see the design of the Prophet: for he condemns the effrontery and frowardness of the Jews, because they thus dared to rush into God's presence in all their pollutions.

And ye say, he adds, that is, while standing in the Temple; ye say, O, we are freed to do all these abominations; that is, ``Ye think that the Temple is a covert for you to hide all your vices; and so ye think, that you have escaped from my hand, as though no account is any more to be made of your sins, my Temple being regarded by you as an asylum, under whose shade ye take shelter.'' It is indeed certain, that the Jews did not thus speak; for had they been asked whether their life was abominable, they would have denied it to be so. He speaks of the fact itself, and he speaks in the person of God, and according to his command. He therefore condemns hypocrites for thinking themselves freed, because they came to the Temple, and for thinking that all those abominations which he had mentioned, their impiety towards God and their injustice towards their neighbors, would be unpunished. [193]

[193] The three foregoing verses admit of a different construction, though the general meaning continues the same. It is usual to consider the words in the ninth verse as verbs in the infinitive mood; but they are participles, and stand connected with the previous verse. The Targum render them as personal nouns, “thieves, murderers,“ etc.: but they are in Hebrew in the singular number, the collective singular being often employed in that language. The passage may be thus rendered, — 8. Behold, ye trust in words of falsehood to no profit, — 9. The thief, murderer, and adulterer, And the false swearer and incense-burner to Baal, And the walker after foreign gods, Whom ye have not known; 10. And ye come and stand before me In this house, on which is called my name, And ye say, “We are freed To do all these abominations,” Or, And ye say, “He has made us free To do all these abominations.” Blayney, following the Syriac, has rendered the words, — And say, Deliver us, that we may practice all these abominations. But what is most consistent with the passage is to consider the sentence as declarative, and not as

He afterwards adds, Is this house, which is called by my name, a den of robbers? This is the conclusion of the passage, which contains an amplification of their vices. For the Prophet had allowed the Jews to form a judgment, as though he had been discussing an obscure or doubtful subject, ``Behold, be ye yourselves judges in your own case; is it right for you to steal, to murder, and to commit adultery? and then to come into this Temple, and to boast that impunity is granted to you as to all your evils?'' This indeed ought to have been enough; but as the obstinacy and stupor of the Jews were so great, that they would not have given way without being most fully and in various ways proved guilty, the Prophet adds this sentence, Is this house, which is called by my name, a den of robbers? that is, ``Have I chosen this place for myself, that ye might worship me, in order that ye might be more licentious than if there was no religion? For what purpose is religion? Is it not that men may by this bridle restrain themselves, that they may not be libertines? For surely the worship and fear of God are the directors of equity and justice. Now, would it not be better to have no Temple and no sacrifices, than that men should take more liberty to sin by making their ceremonies as an excuse? Away then with your ceremonies: conscience shews that it is a wretched thing to oppress or injure a neighbor; all are constrained by common sense to own that adultery is a filthy and a detestable thing; and men think the same of rapines and murders. As to superstitions, when they are seen as such, all are constrained to allow the worship of God ought to be preserved in its purity. Well then, had there been no Temple among you, this truth must have been impressed on your minds, --- that God ought to be worshipped in purity. Now, because the Temple has been built at Jerusalem, because ye offer sacrifices there, ye are thieves, ye are adulterers, ye are murderers; and ye think that I am in some sort blind, that I am no longer the avenger of so many and of such atrocious evils. A den of robbers then is my house become to you.'' But this sentence is to be read interrogatively, ``Can it be, that this Temple, this sanctuary, is become a den of robbers?'' [194]

But we must consider the import of the comparison: Robbers, though they are most audacious and wholly savage, do not yet dare openly to use their sword; they dare not kill helpless men. Why? they fear the punishment allotted to them by the laws; they are cautious. But when they seize on men in some hidden place, then they take more liberty in their robberies; they kill men, and then take their property. We hence see that dens and hidden places have in them more safety for

a prayer. They considered themselves freed from guilt when they had offered their sacrifices. They thought themselves then at liberty to be immoral and also to be idolatrous. We might think such a state of blindness and infatuation impossible; but it has existed among those calling themselves Christians, and it exists now. Gataker mentions a common saying among ignorant Papists of the same import with what is said here, “We must sin to be shriven, and shriven to sin.” The turning of the grace of God into lasciviousness is the same thing. — Ed.

[194] It is to be observed that one only of the vices mentioned in verse 9 is here referred to, the first in the catalogue. But as the Temple was the den of thieves, so it was also made the asylum of murderers, adulterers, and of idolaters. It seems then, that the Jews thought that by sacrifices they purchased immunity not only for theft, murder, adultery, false swearing, but also for idolatry, and that having sacrificed they were free to commit all these evils. How unaccountably strange is the conduct of deluded man! The words “Which is called by my name,“ are literally, “Which called is my name upon it,“ an idiomatic mode of speaking, with which the Welsh exactly corresponds, — Yr hwn y gelwir fy enw arno. The pronoun relative without a preposition is afterwards followed by a pronoun substantive with a preposition prefixed. — Ed.

robbers. The comparison then is most suitable, when the Prophet says that the Jews made the Temple of God the den of robbers: for had there been no Temple, some integrity might have remained, secured by the common feeling of men. But when they covered their baseness with sacrifices, they thought that they thus escaped all judgment.

And hence, Christ applied this prophecy to his time; for the Jews had even then profaned the Temple. Though they presumptuously and falsely called on God's name, they yet sought the Temple as an asylum for impurity. This folly Christ exposed, as the Prophet had done.

He afterwards adds, Even I, behold I see, saith Jehovah Jeremiah here no doubt touches ironically on the false confidence with which the Jews deceived themselves: for hypocrites seem to themselves to know whatever is necessary. And hence also it is, that as they think themselves to be acute, they are bolder and more presumptuous in contriving deceitful schemes, by which they seek to delude God and men. And hence the Prophet here tauntingly touches them to the quick, by intimating that they wished to make God as it were blind, Even I, behold I see, he says. It would not yet be sufficiently evident how emphatical the phrase is, were it not for a similar passage in Isaiah 29:15,

``I also am wise.'' The Prophet had said, ``Woe to the crafty and the wise, who have dug pits for themselves.''

He there condemns ungodly men, who thought that they could somehow by their falsehoods deceive God; which seems to be and is monstrous: and yet it is an evil which commonly prevails among men. For hardly a man in a hundred can be found who does not seek coverings to hide himself from the eyes of God. This is the case especially with courtiers and clever men, who assume to themselves so much clear-sightedness, that God sees nothing in comparison with them. The Lord therefore, by Isaiah, gives this answer, ``I also am wise: if ye are wise, allow me at least some portion of wisdom, and think not that I am altogether foolish.'' So also in this place, ``Before my eyes, this house is made a den of robbers;'' that is, ``If there be any sense in you, does it not appear evident that you have made a den of robbers of my Temple? and can I be yet blind? If you think that you are very clear-sighted, I also do see, saith the Lord.''

We hence see what force there is in the particle {גם}, gam, also, and in the pronoun {אנכי}, anoki, I, and in {הנה}, ene, behold; for these three words are heaped together, that God might shew that he was not unobservant, when the people so audaciously ran headlong into all kinds of vices, and sought by their falsehoods to cover his eyes, that he might not see anything. [195]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou buildest not at this day a temple among us of wood and stones, and as the fullness of thy Godhead dwells in thine only --- begotten Son, and as he by his power fills the whole world, and dwells in the midst of us, and even in us, --- O grant, that we may not profane his sanctuary by our vices and sins,

[195] The verb is in the past tense,- I also, behold, seen have I, saith Jehovah. That is, He had seen all they did. If anything be put after "seen," it should be "these things," and not "it;" for the reference is to the particulars before mentioned. See Psalm 10:14; Ezekiel 8:12. — Ed.

but so strive to consecrate ourselves to thy service, that thy name through his name may be continually glorified, until we shall at length be received into that eternal inheritance, where will appear to us openly, and face to face, that glory which we now see in the truth contained in thy gospel. --- Amen.

Lecture Twenty-Eighth

Jeremiah 7:12-14

12. But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.

12. Nempe ite nunc (vel, agedum) in locum meum, qui erat in Silo, ubi habitare feci nomen meum initio, et videte quid fecerim illic propter malitiam populi mei Israel.

13. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not;

13. Et nunc quia fecistis omnia opera haee (id est, quia imitati estis Israelitas) dicit Jehovah, et loquutus sum ad vos mane surgens, et quum loquerer, non audistis, et inclamarem vos, non respondistis.

14. Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.

14. Faciam igitur domui huic, in qua (super quam) invocatum est nomen meum, de qua vos fiditis (in qua vos confiditis, sequitur postea relativum) et loco, quem dedi vobis et patribus vestris, sicuti feci Silo.

The Prophet confirms by an example what he said yesterday, --- that the Jews deceived themselves in thinking that they were covered by the shadow of the Temple, while yet they disclosed themselves, and when the whole world were witness of their impious rebellion. He therefore mentions what had before happened. The Ark of the Covenant, as it is well known, had long rested in Shiloh. Now the Temple did not excel in dignity on its own account, but on account of the Ark of the Covenant and the altar. It was indeed splendidly adorned; but the holiness of the Temple was derived from the Ark of the Covenant, the altar, and the sacrifices. This Ark had been in Shiloh. [196] Hence Jeremiah shews how foolish were the Jews in being proud, because they had among them the Ark of the Covenant and the altar, for the first place, where sacrifices had been offered to God, was not preserved in safety. This is the import of the whole.

But he did not in vain say, Even go to Shiloh The {כי}, ki, here, though commonly a causal particle, seems to be taken as explanatory. If yet it be viewed only as an affirmative, I do not object, ``Well, go to Shiloh.'' But the language in this case is ironical, ``Ye glory in the Temple; forsooth! go to Shiloh.'' And God calls it his place --- my place, in order that the Jews might understand that it had nothing superior in itself. The Ark of the Covenant had indeed been removed into Mount Sion, and there

[196] This was in the tribe of Ephraim, between Bethel and Shechem, Judges 21:19, about twenty-five miles north of Jerusalem. The Ark had been there more than 300 years. It did not return there after it was brought forth in the war against the Philistines. The place afterwards declined, and its ruinous state became a proverb. See Joshua 18:1; Psalm 78:60; Jeremiah 26:6, 9. — Ed.

God had chosen a perpetual habitation for himself; but the other place was superior as to antiquity. This is the reason why he calls it ``my place, ``and adds, Where I made my name to dwell, that is, where I designed the Ark to be: for the Ark of the Covenant and the altar, with all their furniture, were properly the name of God; nor was it by chance that all the tribes had placed the Ark in Shiloh; but it was God's will to be there worshipped for a time. Hence he says, that the place was sacred before Jerusalem; and therefore he says at the first, {בראשונה}, berashune; that is, the Shilomites are not only equal with you, but antiquity brings them a greater honor: if then a comparison is made, they excel you as to what is ancient.

See, he says, what I did to that place for the iniquity of my people Israel. He calls here Israel his people, not for honor's sake, but that he might again remind the Jews that they were only equal to the Israelites; and yet that it profited all the tribes nothing, that they were wont to assemble there to worship God. [197] For when we reason from example, we must always see that there be no material difference. Jeremiah then shews that the Israelites were equal to the Jews, and that if the Jews claimed a superiority, the claim was neither just nor right, for Israel were also the people of God, inasmuch as it was God's will to fix there the Ark of the Covenant, that sacrifices might be there offered to him; and then antiquity was in its favor, for it was a holy place before it was known that God had chosen Mount Sion as a situation for his Temple.

Hence he draws this conclusion, Now, then, as ye have done all these works, that is, as ye have become like the Israelites, therefore, etc. But he first amplifies their crime, --- that they had not only imitated the wickedness of the twelve tribes, but had also perversely despised all warnings, I spake to you, he says, and rose up early By this metaphor he intimates, that he was as solicitous for preserving the kingdom of Judah, as parents are wont to be for the safety of their children: for as a father rises early to see what is necessary for his family, so also God says, that he rose early, inasmuch as he had been assiduous in exhorting them. He appropriates to his own person what properly belonged to his prophets: but as he had roused them by his Spirit and employed them in their work, he justly claims to himself whatever he had done by them as his instruments: and it was an exaggeration of their guilt, that they were slothful, nay, stupid, when God sedulously labored for their safety.

He adds, I spoke, and ye heard not; I cried to you, and ye did not answer, he inveighs more at large against their hardness; for had he only once warned them, some pretense might have been made; but as God, by rising early every day, labored to restore them to himself, and as he had not only employed instruction, but also crying, (for by crying he doubtless means exhortations and threatenings, which ought to have produced greater effect upon them,) there appeared in this contumacy the

[197] Blayney thinks that the reference is not to the ruinous condition of Shiloh, immediately subsequent to the time when the Ark was removed thence, but to the devastation occasioned by the captivity of the ten tribes, which was a recent occurrence, this reason is, because they were then directed to go and see the place. But if the place had ever continued in a ruinous state, and was so at that time, there was every propriety in saying, “Go now and see it.” Besides, the argument is not so complete, as when its dilapidated state, occasioned by the sins of the people, when the Ark was thence removed, is referred to. “It is probable,“ says Henry, “that the ruins of that once flourishing city were yet remaining: however, they might read the history of it, which ought to affect them as if they saw the place.” — Ed.

highest degree of mad audacity. The meaning is, --- that God had tried all means to restore the Jews to a sound mind, but that they were wholly irreclaimable; for he had called them not only once, but often; and he had also endued his prophets with power to labor strenuously in the discharge of their office: he had not only shewed by them what was useful and necessary, but he had cried, that is, had employed greater vehemence, in order to correct their tardiness. Since then God, in using all these means, could effect nothing, what remained for them was miserably to perish, as they willfully sought their own destruction.

Therefore, he says, I will do to this house, which is called by my name, etc. He anticipates, no doubt, all objections, as though he had said, ``I know what you will say, --- that this place is sacred to God, that his name is invoked here, and that sacrifices are here offered: all these things, he says, are alleged to no purpose, for in Shiloh also was his name invoked, and he dwelt there. Though then ye foolishly trust in this place, it shall not yet escape that judgment which happened to the former place.'' He adds, which I gave to you and to your fathers Be it so; for this is to be considered as a concession; and at the same time objections are anticipated, in order that the Jews might understand that it availed them nothing, that God had chosen to build his sanctuary on Mount Sion; for the object was to promote religion. But as the place was converted to a wholly different purpose, and as God's name was there shamefully profaned, he says, ``Though I gave this place to you and your fathers, yet nothing better shall be its fate than the fate of Shiloh.'' [198] It follows ---

Jeremiah 7:15

15. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.

15. Et projiciam vos a facie mea, sicuti projeci omnes fratres vestros, totum semen Ephraim.

He concludes the former verse. The Prophet had indeed sufficiently explained himself; but this confirmation was necessary for a people so refractory. He then alleges nothing new, but only shews that there would be no defense to his own people against God's vengeance any more than to the Israelites: and hence he now calls them their brethren, as he had previously said that they were his people; for the state of the ten tribes was the same, until it had pleased God to remove the Ark of the Covenant to Mount Sion, that he might have his throne in the tribe of Judah. All the children of Abraham were indeed equal; but the Israelites were superior in number and in power. And he says, the whole seed. This is significantly added; for the Jews had with them only the half of the tribe of Manasse. The ten tribes had perished; in nothing could they exalt themselves; and they were in this respect inferior, because

[198] The literal rendering of the two verses is as follows:- 13. And now, as ye have done all these doings, saith Jehovah, And as I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, And ye have not hearkened, And I have called you, and ye have not answered; 14. I will also do to the house, On which my name is called, In which ye trust, and to the place, Which I gave to you and to your fathers, According to what I did to Shiloh: "The house" was the Temple, "the place" was the city: both are threatened with destruction. Then he says in the next verse, "And I will cast you from my presence." The Temple and the city were to be destroyed like Shiloh; and they ("you") were to be dealt with as their brethren, the ten tribes, who had been driven into exile. — Ed.

they were only one tribe and half, and the ten tribes were larger in number. [199]

He calls them the seed of Ephraim, because of their first king, and also because that tribe was more illustrious than the other nine tribes. And in the Prophets Ephraim is in many places named for Israel, that is, for that second kingdom, which yet flourished more in wealth and power. We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet.

But we may hence learn this important truth, --- that God had never so bound himself to any people or place, that he was not at liberty to inflict punishment on the impiety of those who had despised his favors, or profaned them by their ingratitude and their sins. And this ought to be carefully noticed; for we see that it is an evil as it were innate in us, that we become elated and proud whenever God deals bountifully with us; for we so abuse his favors as to think that more liberty is given us, because God has bestowed on us more than on others. But there is nothing more groundless than this presumption; and yet we become thus insolent whenever God honors us with peculiar favors. Let us therefore bear in mind what is taught here by the Prophet, --- that God is ever at liberty to take vengeance on the ungodly and the ungrateful.

Hence also it appears how foolish is the boasting of the Papists; for whenever they bring against us the name of the apostolic throne, they think that God's mouth is closed; they think that all authority is to be taken away from his word. In short, they harden themselves against God, as though they had a legitimate possession, because the gospel had been once preached at Rome, and because that place was the first seat of the Church in Italy as well as in Europe. But God never favored Rome with such a privilege, nor has he said that his habitation was to be there. If the Pope and his adherents had what the Jews then possessed, (which really belonged to Mount Sion,) who could bear their fury, I say not, their pride? But we see what Jeremiah says of Mount Sion, of which yet it had been said,

``This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell,
because I have chosen it.'' (Psalm 132:14)

Go now, he says, to Shiloh Now, since Shiloh and Jerusalem, and so many celebrated cities, where the gospel formerly flourished, have been taken away from us, it is not to be doubted, but that a dreadful vengeance and destruction await all those who reject the doctrine of salvation, and despise the treasure of the gospel. Since then God has shewn by so many proofs and examples that he is not bound to any places, how stupid is their madness who seek, through the mere name of an apostolic seat, to subvert all truth and all fear of God, and whatever belongs to true religion. Let us now proceed ---

Jeremiah 7:16

16. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee.

16. Et tu ne ores pro populo hoc, et ne eleves pro ipsis clamorem et precationem, et ne occurras (intercedas; est enim translativum verbum, nam {פנע} significat ob-

[199] This is hardly correct. The reference is to the state of the Jews at that time. The Jews were formed of two tribes, Judah and Benjamin. They were joined, after the captivity of Israel, by several of the remnants both of Ephraim and Manasseh, and of the other tribes. (2 Chronicles 34:9.) There is indeed mention made of some from the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, coming to worship at Jerusalem in the reign of Asa; but we do not read that they settled there. — Ed.

viam ire, sed accipitur pro intercedere, ne ergo intercedas) apud me, quia non exaudiam to.

God, in order to exonerate his servant from every ill-will, forbids him to pray for the people. This might have been done for the sake of the Prophet, as well as of the whole people; for no doubt Jeremiah regarded the ruin of his own nation with great grief and sorrow: as we shall see elsewhere, he had not divested himself of all human feelings. He was doubtless anxious for the safety of his brethren, and he condoled with the miserable, when he saw that they were already given up to destruction. But God strengthens him, that he might courageously discharge his office; for pity has often melted the hearts of men so as not to be able, as they ought, to perform their office. Jeremiah might have been more tardy or more temperate in denouncing God's vengeance, had not all impediments, which checked his alacrity, been removed. Hence then he is bidden to divest himself of sympathy, so that he might rise above all human feelings, and remember that he was set a judge over the people, or a herald to denounce their final doom. There is yet no doubt but that God had respect to the people also, --- to make it known to them that Jeremiah was constrained to perform his part, however unpleasant it might be to him. Hence, as I have said, he was thus relieved from the charge of ill-will, lest he should exasperate his own nation while treating them with so much severity.

Pray not, he says, for this people; and then, Raise not up a prayer Some read, ``Take not up a prayer.'' The verb {נשא}, nesha, properly means to raise up. We have spoken of this phrase elsewhere; for there are two different ways of speaking when prayer is the subject. The Scripture sometimes says of the faithful, that they cast a prayer before God; and thus is set forth their humility, when they come as suppliants, and dare not lift upwards their eyes, like the publican, of whom Christ speaks. (Luke 18:13.) We are then said to cast a prayer before God, when we humbly seek pardon, and stand before him with shame and self --- reproach. We are also said, for another reason, to raise up a prayer; for when our hearts sink and ascend not to God in faith, it is certain that our prayers are not real: hence the faithful, on account of the fervor of their desire, are said to raise up their prayers. Even so the meaning is here, Raise not up for them a cry and a prayer

Then he says, Intercede not, for I will not hear thee [200] There is yet no doubt but that the Prophet, as we shall see, continued in his prayers; but still as one knowing that the safety of the city and kingdom would no longer be granted by God: for he might have prayed for two things, --- that God would reverse his decree; and this he was forbidden to do; --- and, that God would be mindful of his covenant in preserving a remnant; and this was done; for the name of the people, though the city and the Temple were destroyed, has never been obliterated. Some people then survived, though without any distinction or renown. And hence at the restoration of

[200] There are here three things forbidden; their distinctive character is not correctly given in our version nor by Calvin. I render the verse thus, — And thou, be not an intercessor for this people, Nor raise for them a cry and a supplication, Nor make an entreaty to me, For I will not hear thee. That is, "Undertake not their cause as one who intercedes or mediates between a judge and a criminal, nor cry suppliantly for mercy, nor entreat me to be favorable to them." He was not to be for them an intercessor, nor a deprecator of evils, nor a solicitor of favors. All the versions render the passage loosely. — Ed.

the Church God calls its subjects a new people, as in Psalm 102:19,

``A people who shall be created,'' that is, a new people,

``shall praise the Lord,''

as though he intimated that the Babylonian exile would be the ruin of his ancient people. God has, however, preserved a remnant, as Paul says in Romans 10 and Romans 11. So for the whole body of the people, and for the kingdom, the Prophet was not to pray, because he knew that it was all over with the people. But on this subject we shall speak more at large in another place. It follows ---

Jeremiah 7:17-19

17. Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

17. An non rvides tu quid ipsi faciant in urbibus Jehudah et in compitis Jerusalem?

18. The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

18. Filii colligunt ligna, et patres accendunt ignem, et mulieres ad ponendum ut faciant placentas Reginae coelorum, et fundant (libent) libamina diis alienis, ut me provocent ad iram.

19. Do they provoke me to anger? saith the LORD: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces?

19. An me ipsi ad iram provocant, dicit Jehova? an non seipsos ad erubescentiam facierum suarum?

Here God shews first why he ought to be implacable towards the people: for the command to the Prophet not to pray for them seems at the first hearing to be very severe; and it might have been objected and said, ``What if they repent? Is there no hope of pardon?'' God shews that they were past remedy --- How so? He says, Dost thou not see? Here he refers the examination of the cause to his servant Jeremiah; as though he had said, ``There is no reason for thee to contend with me; open thine own eyes, and consider how they have fallen; for children gather wood, and fathers kindle the fire, and women knead dough.'' Some render the last words, ``Women are busy with the paste;'' but literally, ``they set the dough, ``la paste God intimates here shortly, that the whole people were become corrupt, as though they had wickedly conspired together, so that men, women, and children, were all led away into idolatry as by a mad impulse; for he speaks here only of their superstitions. He had before charged them with adulteries, murders, and plunders; but he now condemns them for having wholly profaned God's worship, and at the same time shews the fruit of their impiety --- that they all strove to outdo one another by an insane rivalship.

The children, he says, gather wood He ascribes the collecting of wood to the young; for it was a more laborious work. As then that age excels in strength, they collected wood; and the fathers kindled the fire: the women, what did they do? They were busy with the meal. Thus no part was neglected. ``What then is to be done? and what else can I do, but wholly to cut off a people so wicked?'' Then he says, that they may make {כונים}, cunim, which is translated ``cakes, ``and this is the most common rendering. Some think that kindling is meant, deriving the word from

{כוה}, cue, which means to kindle. But I prefer the opinion of those who derive the word from {כון}, cun, which is to prepare, as cakes are things prepared. I do not then doubt, but that cakes are meant here, as it appears also from other places. The second interpretation I regard as too refined. [201]

With regard to the word {למלכת}, lamelcath, many consider the letter {א} left out, and think that ``works'' are intended. In this case {מ} would be a servile: but others consider it a radical, and render the word, ``Queen;'' which appears to me probable; though I do not wholly reject what some hold that the workmanship of the heavens is here meant. Some understand the stars, others the sun, and others the moon: let every one enjoy his own opinion. However, I think, that if the workmanship of the heavens be meant, the whole celestial host is to be included, as the Scripture thus calls all the stars. But if ``the Queen of the heavens'' be adopted, then I am inclined to think that the moon is intended: and we know how much superstition has ever prevailed among most people as to the worship of the moon. Hence I approve of this meaning. Yet I readily admit that all the stars, not one only, may be here designated, and called the work or the workmanship of the heavens. And the Jews, we know, were very much given to this madness: for as the sun was considered by the Orientals as the supreme God, when the Jews became enamoured with this error, they also thought that some high and adorable divinity belonged to the sun: they turned also afterwards to the stars; and this absurdity is often referred to in the Law and also in the Prophets. [202]

It is then added, That they may pour forth libations to foreign gods, to provoke me to wrath When God complains of being provoked, it is the same as though he had said, that the Jews now openly carried on war with him, --- ``They sin not through ignorance, nor is it unknown to them how much they offend me by these profanations; but it is as it were their object and design to provoke me and to carry on war with me by these acts of impiety.''

He then subjoins, Do they provoke me, and not rather to the shame of their own faces? God here intimates, that however reproachfully the Jews acted towards him, they yet brought no loss to him, for he stood in no need of their worship. Why then does he so severely threaten them? Because he had their sins in view: but yet he shews that he cared not for them nor their sacrifices, for he could without any loss be without them. Hence he says, that they sought their own ruin, and whatever they

[201] The ancient versions (the Arabic excepted) and the Targum render the word, cakes — placentas It is only found elsewhere in Jeremiah 44:19. — Ed.

[202] The Septuagint render the words here, "the host of heaven," and in Jeremiah 44:17 and 19, "the queen of heaven." The Vulgate in the three places, renders them "the queen of heaven,"— the Targum, "the star of heaven," — and the Syriac, "the army of heaven," in the two first places, but in the last, "the queen of heaven." There are several MSS., in the three places, which insert the {,{א so as to make the word ``work,`` or workmanship: but this change has evidently arisen from the Septuagint. But this word is never used to designate the work of the visible heavens: the word used in that case is .{מעשה} See Psalm 8:3; Psalm 19:1; Psalm 102:25; Psalm 143:5. Our version and the Vulgate are no doubt right. But what is intended by the queen of heaven is not the moon; for the word commonly used for the moon is always masculine, and the word generally used for the sun is commonly feminine. This may appear strange; but so it is. In South Wales the word for sun is always feminine, but in North Wales, masculine. In Deuteronomy 4:19, the sun, the moon, and the stars, as constituting the host of heaven, are mentioned together: these the first, as including all the rest, seems to be intended. Instead of ``queen,`` we should say in our language, ``the king of the heavens.'' We do not read that the Jews worshipped the moon; but the worship of the sun among them is specifically referred to and mentioned. See 2 Kings 23:11; Ezekiel 8:16. The Israelites adored the sun under the name of Baal, which was the Chemosh of the Moabites, and the Moloch of the Ammonites. --- Ed.

devised would fall on their own heads. They seek to provoke me; they shall know with whom they have to do.'' It is like what is said by the Prophet Zechariah, ``They shall know whom they have pierced: I indeed continue uninjured; and though they provoke me as much as they can, I yet despise all their wickedness, for they cannot reach me; they can neither hurt me nor take anything from me.'' But he says, they provoke themselves, that is, their fury shall return on their own heads; and hence it shall be, that their faces shall be ashamed. [203]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are inclined not only to superstitions, but also to many vices, we may be restrained by thy word, and as thou art pleased daily to remind us of thy benefits, that thou mayest keep us in the practice of true religion, --- O grant, that we may not be led astray by the delusions of Satan and by our own vanity, but continue firm and steady in our obedience to thee, and constantly proceed in the course of true piety, so that we may at length partake of its fruit in thy celestial kingdom, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only --- begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Twenty-Ninth

Jeremiah 7:20

20. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched.

20. Propterea sic dicit Dominus Jehova, Ecce ira mea et furor meus (vel, excandescentia, nam verbum hoc significat) conflata est super locum hunc, super hominem et super animal (brutum; alii vertunt, jumentum, bestiam,) super arborem agri, et super fructum terrae; et ardebit, et nullus extinguet.

Jeremiah proceeds still with the same subject, and explains more at large what we have noticed in the preceding lecture, that the ruin of Mount Sion and of the Temple was nigh at hand, according to what God had before done to Shiloh, where the Ark had long been kept. But that his threatening might have more weight, he introduced God as the speaker, ---

Behold, he says, my wrath, even mine indignation, has been poured down on this place He refers to the metaphor he had before used; and hence is confirmed what I then said, --- that God spoke not of prophetic teaching, but of the punishments which he had already inflicted and was prepared to inflict. On this account he says, that his wrath, or vengeance (the cause is put for the effect) had been poured down on the city Jerusalem, so as to bring destruction on the cattle as well as men, and also on the fruit of the land. It is indeed certain that brute animals, as well as trees and the productions of the earth, were innocent; but as the whole world was created for man and for his benefit, it is nothing strange that God's vengeance should extend to innocent animals and to things not endued with reason: for God does not inflict

[203] The verb rendered "provoke," means to disturb, to disquiet, to cause an annoyance, to irritate, — Is it I they are annoying, saith Jehovah? Is it not themselves, to the confusion of their own faces? They were not disturbing, as it were, the repose of God, but their own. They could do no hurt or annoyance to God, but they were annoying and injuring themselves; and this would turn out to their own shame and confusion. — Ed.

punishment on brute animals and on the fruits of the earth, except for the purpose of shewing, by extending the symptoms of his wrath to all the elements, how much displeased he is with men. The whole world, we know, bears at this day in some measure the punishment which Adam deserved: and hence Paul says, that all the elements labor in pain, aspiring after a deliverance; and he says also, that all creatures have been subjected to corruption, though not willingly, that is, not through their own fault, but through the sin and transgression of man. (Romans 8:20-22.) It is no wonder, then, that God, wishing to terrify men, should daily set before their eyes the various forms of his vengeance as manifested towards animals, as well as trees and the fruits of the earth.

The meaning then is, --- that God was so angry, that he purposed to destroy, not only the Jews, but the land itself, in order that posterity might know how grievously they had sinned, against whom God's just vengeance had thus kindled. There is therefore no need for us curiously to inquire why God shewed his displeasure towards trees and brute animals: for it is enough for us to know that God does not in a strict sense punish brute animals and trees, but that this is done on account of man, that such a sad spectacle may fill them with fear. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 7:21-24

21. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh.

21. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Holocausta vestra addite super victimas vestras et comedite carnem.

22. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices:

22. Quia non loquutus sum cum patribus vestris, et non praecepi illis quo die eduxi eos e terra Egypti super verbis (hoc est, rationibus, nam {רבד} proprie significat rationem Latine; Hebraei enim ita passim usurpant hanc vocem, sicuti Latini rationem, super rationibus ergo) holocaustorum et victimae:

23. But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.

23. Quin potius (sed {אם} {כי} est adversativa particula, hoc est, hae duae voces ponuntur loco adversativae, sed) verbum hoc praecepi illis, dicendo, Audite vocem meam, et ero vobis in Deum, et vos eritis mihi in populum, et ambulabitis in omni via (hoc est, in tota via) quam mandavero vobis, ut bene sit vobis.

24. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.

24. Et non audierunt, et non inclinarunt aurem suam, et ambulaverunt in perplexis consiliis (proprie accipitur in malam partem) et in pravitate (vel, duritia) cordis sui mali, et fuerunt retro, et non ad faciem.

The Prophet here taunts the Jews for being so sedulous in their attention to sacrifices, while they had no care for piety. Hence he says by way of ridicule, ``Offer your sacrifices, and accumulate burnt-offerings and victims, and eat flesh.'' The last clause proves that God regarded as nothing their sacrifices, and that nothing was ac-

ceptable to him, though the Jews spent much money and spared no labors. God then shews that all these things were nothing to him; eat flesh, he says, which means, ``Ye sacrifice to yourselves, not to me.'' There is here a contrast implied; for when they did eat flesh, there was the legitimate service of God, provided sacrifices were duly offered; but God here excludes himself, as though he had said, ``These things belong not at all to me; for when ye bring sacrifices, your object is to feast: eat, then, and stuff your stomachs; nothing of this belongs to me.'' [204]

The import of the whole is, --- that the feasts which the Jews celebrated were profane, though they pretended the name of God, and wished them to be deemed sacred. Eat then flesh; that is, ``I repudiate your sacrifices; it is to no purpose that ye cover your iniquities by the shadow of the Temple; for your pollutions restrain me from accepting what ye pretend to offer to me.'' By saying, Add sacrifices to victims, he means, that though they sacrificed every animal in the land, it would be all to no purpose; for, as I have said, in offering sacrifices to God their object was to get a feast, inasmuch as they did not regard the right end.

The Prophet therefore adds, I spoke not to your fathers, nor commanded them, in the day I brought them forth from the land of Egypt, concerning sacrifices or burnt --- offerings: but this only I commanded them, to hear my voice, and to walk in all the way which I commanded them. Jeremiah seems to have condemned sacrifices too much; for we know they were designed for certain purposes: they were intended to promote penitence; for when an animal was killed at the altar, all were reminded that they were guilty of death, which the animals underwent instead of men. Hence God did thereby represent to the Jews, as in a mirror, the dreadful judgment they deserved; and the sacrifices were also living images of Christ; they were sure pledges of that expiation through which men are reconciled to God. Jeremiah then seems here to speak too contemptibly of sacrifices; for they were seals of God's grace, and had been instituted to lead men to repentance. But he speaks according to the ideas of those who had strangely vitiated the worship of God; for the Jews were sedulously attentive to sacrifices, and yet neglected the main things --- faith and repentance. Hence the Prophet here repudiates sacrifices, because these false worshippers of God had adulterated them; for they were only intent on external rites, and overlooked their design, and even despised it.

We know that it was God's will from the beginning to be worshipped in a spiritual manner; and he has not changed his nature in our day. As then at this day he approves of no other than a spiritual worship, as He is a Spirit, (John 4:24) so also under the Law he was to be worshipped with a sincere heart. Absurdly then did the Jews offer their sacrifices, as though they could thereby appease God: and this is the reason why the prophets inveighed so pointedly against sacrifices. God says that he nauseated them, that he was wearied with them, that his name was thereby

[204] The meaning is not so plain as it might have been made: the burnt-offerings were all consumed by fire; but a part of the peace-offerings and of other offerings was eaten. See Leviticus 1:9; and Leviticus 7:11-16. Then God says, by way of contempt, "Add your burnt-offerings to your other offerings, and thus you will have your appetites gratified." Some derive the verb rendered "Add," from {,{ספה which means to sweep together; and ``collect together --- {συναγάγετε},'' is the Septuagint; ``heap together'' is the Syriac. This comports better with the contemptuous strain of the passage, --- Your burnt-offerings sweep together To your sacrifices, and eat flesh. --- Ed.

polluted, (Isaiah 1:14) he says also, that to sacrifice was the same as though one killed a dog, an unclean animal, and as though one killed a man. (Isaiah 66:3.)

``What are your offerings and sacrifices to me.''

he says by Amos. Such declarations occur everywhere in the Prophets; we are told that sacrifices were not only of no account before God, but that they were filthy things which he abominated; that is, when the things signified were separated from the signs. This then is the reason why Jeremiah here wholly rejects sacrifices: he complains that God's worship was violated and profaned; and it was so, because the Jews presented to God mere shadows instead of realities.

But still he seems to have exceeded due limits; as he says of God, that he gave no command respecting sacrifices: for before the law was published, God had ordered sacrifices to be offered to him; as, for instance, the passover; for the pascal lamb, as it is well known, was a sacrifice; and he had also spoken of sacrifices before the people were liberated. Moreover, after the law was given, a priesthood was established among the people, as Moses clearly shews. Further still, we see with what care regulations have been given as to sacrifices. Why then is it here said, that he spoke nothing respecting sacrifices? Even because God regards not sacrifices in themselves. He therefore makes a distinction between external signs and spiritual worship; for the Jews, as it has been already said, had by their corruptions so subverted what God had instituted, that he would not acknowledge what they did as having been commanded by him. And if we take the words as they are, they are wholly true, --- that God had commanded nothing respecting mere sacrifices, or sacrifices for their own sake. This distinction solves every difficulty; that is, that God never delighted in sacrifices themselves, that it was never his will to be served with mere external rites, that burnt --- offerings, victims, incense, and things of this kind, were of themselves regarded by him of no value. Since, then, sacrifices did not please God, except on account of the end designed, it remains a clear truth, that God commanded nothing respecting sacrifices: for his design only was to remind the Jews of their sin, and also to shew to them the way of reconciliation. We hence see that God had not from the beginning required mere sacrifices, for he required them for a certain end. It is the same as though we should say at this day, that God regards not fasting. We yet know that fasting is commended to us, but not on account of itself. We now understand the meaning of the Prophet. [205]

Now, this passage contains a very useful doctrine, and which ought the more to be observed by us, as the neglect of it introduces dreadful darkness. They under

[205] This exposition is ingenious and plausible, and all that is said is perfectly true: but it may be doubted whether it be the way to account for the mode of speaking here adopted. It is usual in Scripture, when two things are mentioned, and the one is of little or no importance in comparison with the other, to state the first negatively. “Labor not, “says our Savior, “for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.” John 6:27. But it may be, that the reference here is specifically to the day in which the Israelites were delivered; for on that day, or at that particular time, (for the word day is not to be taken in its strict meaning,) obedience to his voice was the only thing which God required. See Exodus 15:26. Venema thinks that reference is here made, not to the institution of sacrifices, but to the ground of the covenant. Sacrifices were not the condition of the covenant, but obedience. God did not say, “If you sacrifice to me, I will be your God;” but, “If you obey my voice, I will be your God, and you shall be my people.” When the law was delivered on Mount Sinai, there was no mention of sacrifices. — Ed.

the Papacy think that God is duly and in the best manner worshipped, when they accumulate many pompous exhibitions of ceremonies; nor can they be persuaded that all this is altogether frivolous. How so? Because they think of God according to their own fancies and disposition. And yet all the Papal ceremonies are the inventions of men: for they derive no authority either from the Law or from the Gospel. And since God has so severely reprobated ceremonies, which yet he had appointed for a purpose which was overlooked, what can be thought at this day of the foolish inventions of men, when there is the some impiety in the people as was formerly in the Jews? For when the Papists perform their trumperies, when the monks and the sacrificing priests fill the churches with their noises, when they practice their childish mummeries, and when they delight themselves with music and incense, they think that God is satisfied, however full of obscenities and filthiness their whole life may be: they are hardened in that false confidence, by which the Jews were inebriated. We ought, therefore, with special care, to notice this doctrine, --- that God so approves of spiritual worship, that he esteems all other things as nothing; that is, when unconnected with sincerity of heart.

I spoke not then to your fathers, nor commanded them in the day I brought them forth from the land of Egypt, etc. The Prophet calls the attention of the Jews to the first condition of the Church; for though God had made his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, yet he then only formed or framed for himself a Church when the Law was promulgated. Hence God at that time showed what pleased him, and prescribed certain things, which were in future to be inviolably observed: and as the Jews violated the rule given them, the Prophet concludes that God was corruptly and absurdly worshipped by them. This is the reason why he expressly speaks here of the deliverance granted to the fathers. There follows afterwards a clearer explanation, which removes all ambiguity: for God subordinates sacrifices to obedience. Yet sacrifices are a part of obedience: very true; but as the people were to be subject to the whole law, it hence follows, that the worship of God was mutilated by them, when there was no care for true piety. We now then, no doubt, understand the meaning of the Prophet, and see at the same time the reason why God so expressly rejected sacrifices: for what God has connected, it is not in the power of man to separate. (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9.) This rending of things is impious. As the Jews had separated sacrifices from their right and legitimate end, whatever they did was a sacrilege and a profanation.

That we may now more fully comprehend this doctrine, we must remember this principle --- that the basis of true religion is obedience. For unless God shines on us with his word, there is no religion, but only hypocrisy and superstition; as the case is with heathens, who, though they busy themselves much and with great diligence, yet loose all their labor, and uselessly weary themselves, for God has not shewn to them the right way. In short, true religion may always be distinguished from superstition by this mark --- If the truth of God guides us, then our religion is true; but if any one follows his own reason, or is led by the opinion and consent of men, he forms for himself superstition; and nothing that he does will please God. This is one thing.

Now, in the second place, let us see what God chiefly requires from those who are

his servants. Being fully convinced of this truth --- that God cannot be truly served, except we obey his voice, we must consider, as I have said, what God commands us to do. Now, as he is a Spirit, so he demands sincerity of heart. (John 4:24.) We also know that God so comes to us, that he would have us to trust wholly in his gratuitous goodness, that he would have us to depend altogether on his paternal kindness, that he would have us to call on him, and to offer him the sacrifice of praise. Since, then, God has expressly required these things in his word, it is certain, that all other modes of worship are rejected by him as vitious; that is, when there is no faith, when there is no prayer and praise: for these hold the first place in true and legitimate worship.

This one passage is sufficient to put an end to all the contentions which are now in the world. For if the Papists admitted that obedience is of more account with God than all sacrifices, (1 Samuel 15:22,) we might easily agree. They might afterwards debate every article of faith; but there would be in the main an agreement between us, were they to submit simply and unreservedly to the word of God. But we see how pertinaciously they insist on this point --- that we are not to stand on God's word, nor acquiesce in it, because there is in it nothing certain. Hence they regard the doctrine of the Fathers, and what they call the perpetual consent of the Catholic Church, as of more value than the Law and the Prophets and the Gospel. They dare not indeed to contend on this ground; and so far they act wisely: for if the disputes between us are capable of being removed, as I have said, by God's word, we could easily overcome them. But while they, fostering their own blindness, strive to extinguish the light, and willfully envelop themselves in darkness, let us follow what God's Spirit shews to us here, --- that the main part of true and right worship and service is to hear God speaking, and to regard obedience of more account than all offerings and sacrifices, according to the passage we have quoted from 1 Samuel 15:22.

He afterwards adds, I will be to you a God, and ye shall be to me a people; and ye shall walk in all the way which I shall shew to you, that it may be well with you. The Prophet confirms what I have already said, that if we would obey God, we must consider what he commands. Now God omits no part of true worship: we shall then never go astray from true religion, if only we render ourselves teachable. Whence then is it, that men diligently labor and profit nothing, except that they are deaf to God's voice? for as it has been already often said, God has not only spoken generally, and in various ways, of obedience, but has clearly and distinctly taught what he approves. Our obedience then will please him, if only we learn what he would have us to do.

And at the same time he adds, that this condition was mentioned to the Jews, that it would be well with them, if they only obeyed God. Hence their perverseness is more fully detected; for they willfully sought to be miserable, and procured for themselves their own destruction: for a happy life was offered to them, provided only they submitted to God. Since they refused this, who does not see that they willfully gave themselves up to misery, as though they wished to provoke God's anger, and did so designedly? for it immediately follows ---

They hearkened not nor inclined their ear Here the Prophet shews, that the Jews did not then begin to be rebellious against God and his word; for they imitated the

impious contumacy of their fathers: and he dwells on this more at large. He now says, ``I gave no command about sacrifices, but only this one thing I required of your fathers, to obey me.'' They hearkened not, he says. What could have been a juster demand than that they should obey God? How great, then, and how base an indignity it was, to reject his authority? Nay, still more, they inclined not the ear: for by this phrase the Prophet means not only a contempt of his word and indifference, but their obstinacy and willfulness, inasmuch as they had hardened themselves against God. Hypocrites do, indeed, sometimes incline the ear, and wish to know what is said, and in some measure consider it: but the Prophet here sets forth as it were the insane contumacy of the Jews, for they inclined not, no, not even the ear to God speaking to them.

He afterwards adds, that they walked in their tortuous counsels, and also, in the wickedness of their evil heart [206] This comparison aggravates their sin, --- the Jews preferred to follow their own humor rather than to obey God and his commands. Had anything been set before them, which might have deceived them and obscured the authority of the law, there would have been some excuse: but when there was nothing to prevent them from obeying the command of God, except that they followed their own foolish imaginations, they were wholly inexcusable. For what excuse could they have made? That they wished to be wiser than God! How great a madness was this, and how diabolical? But the Prophet leaves them nothing but this vain excuse, which doubled their guilt. They thought, no doubt, that their heart was well fitted for the purpose: but he does not here allow them to judge, but distinctly condemns them as they deserved.

We ought to take particular notice of this passage; for the majority of men at this day set up their own fictions against God's word. The Papists indeed pretend antiquity; they say that they have been taught by their ancestors; and at the same time they plead councils and the ordinances of the fathers: but yet there is not one of them, who is not addicted to his own figments, and who does not take the liberty, nay, an unbridled license, to reject whatever he pleases. Moreover, if the origin of the whole Papal worship be considered, it will appear, that those who first devised so many strange superstitions, were only impelled by audacity and presumption, in order that they might trample under foot the word of God. Hence it is, that all things are become corrupt; for they brought in all the strange figments of their own brains. And we see that the Papists at this day are so perversely fixed in their own errors, that they prefer themselves and their own trumperies to God. And the same is the case also with all heretics. What then is to be done? Obedience, as I have said, is to be held as the basis of all true religion. If, then, on the other hand, we wish to render our worship approved by God, let us learn to cast aside whatever is our own, so that his authority may prevail over all our reasons.

Let us further notice how detestable a sacrilege it is, to follow the wickedness of

[206] The words are literally, — And they walked in the counsels, — In the resolutions of their evil heart. They not only devised their own ways, but resolved to walk in them. They formed their own counsels, and made resolutions to follow them, and they were the counsels and resolutions of a disordered and perverted heart. In rendering the last word “wickedness,“ Calvin has followed the Vulgate; and our version, “imagination,“ is the Targum. It is omitted in the Septuagint, and “desires” in Syriac. See note on Jeremiah 3:17. — Ed.

our heart rather than to obey God, when he shews to us, as by the finger, the way of salvation. Let us also observe, that nothing will then do us good, though we may seem to ourselves to be very wise, and praise ourselves in our folly; for God declares here that our heart is evil whenever we turn aside from his pure word.

He says, that they were behind and not before By this phrase he intimates that the Jews turned the back, that they might not look at him or go forward. For when one promises to be our leader to conduct us in the way, we immediately turn our eyes to him; but when we turn our back, it is a proof of our contempt. And thus God complains of his people, that he was despised by them; for they had not only been deaf to the prophetic teaching and admonitions, but had also turned their faces another way, as a proof of a contumacy still worse, so that they forsook him, and as it were bade him to be gone. [207] This is the import of the last sentence. We shall proceed to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast at this day so clearly revealed to us thy will that there can remain no pretense of ignorance, we may on that account submit to thee with a freer and more ready mind, and that we may not only incline our ears to thee, but also so attend to thee with all our hearts, that we may desire no other thing than to make our whole life approved by thee: and as we cannot but turn aside, through our obstinacy and wickedness, from the right way, do thou so enlighten us by the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge, that we may strive to embrace whatever thou hast been pleased to prescribe to us in thy word, so that when the course of this life shall be finished, we may at length reach the goal, and partake of the fruit of our obedience, and enjoy that eternal inheritance, which thine only --- begotten Son has procured for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirtieth

Jeremiah 7:25-26

25. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them:

25. Ab eo die quo egressi sunt patres vestri e terra Egypti usque ad diem hunc misi ad vos omnes servos meos prophetas, quotidie mane surgendo et mittendo:

26. Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.

26. Et non audierunt me, et non inclinaverunt aurem suam; et (pro sed) obdurarunt cervicem suam, perverse egerunt prae patribus suis.

God complains of the perverse wickedness of the people, --- that he had lost all

[207] The words are, — And they were for behind, and not for before them; which seem to mean, that they were bent on turning back to their own ways rather than to go on in the ways of God. The version of the Septuagint is, "They were for things behind, and not for things before;" the Syriac and Arabic, "They retrograded and did not advance, "or go forward. The allusion seems not to be, as Blayney thinks, to refractory oxen under the yoke; but to those travelers who, when shewn the right way, go back instead of going forward. And this was especially true of the Israelites, who, after having left Egypt, wished often to return, instead of going forward to Canaan. Hence it is said, that they were going back to their old ways, and not going forward in the way which God bad pointed out to them. The phrase in Jeremiah 2:27, is of another kind, and ought not to be confounded with this. — Ed.

his labor in endeavoring to lead them to repentance, not only in one age, but that the children succeeded their fathers in their corruptions, and that thus the imitation had become perpetual. This might indeed appear as an extenuation of their fault; they might have pleaded as the Papists at this day do; who have no pretext more specious, than when they bring against us the Fathers and antiquity. But God shews in this place and elsewhere that the children are not excused by the examples of their fathers; but on the contrary, that it is an aggravation of the crime, when men thus harden themselves, and think that a continued indulgence in vices avails them for a precedent; for God does not thus permit himself to be deprived of his own right. This passage then deserves particular notice; for God not only condemned those who were then living and whom Jeremiah addressed, but also connected with them the dead, in order to prove their greater obstinacy, as impiety had been as it were handed down from one age to another.

From the day, he says, in which your fathers came forth from the land of Egypt unto this day, have I sent to you, etc. We know how intractable the people had been from the beginning; for they did all they could to reject Moses, the minister of a favor so remarkable and invaluable. And after their deliverance, they were continually either clamoring against God, or openly contending with Moses and Aaron, or running into gross idolatry, or giving loose reins to their lusts; in short, there was no end to their course of sinning: and yet Moses daily endeavored to restore them to obedience. It was this great contumacy that God now refers to; and he says, that the Israelites did not then begin to be disobedient, but that they had ever been of such a disposition as not to bear to be corrected, as he will tell us hereafter. It was not necessary here to adduce examples to shew that the people had been indomitable; for this was evident from sacred history. It was enough to remind them, that the hardness and obstinacy of the fathers had descended to their children, so that they might know that they were twofold and treblefold guilty before God, for they had imitated the perverseness which God had before severely punished; nor was it unknown to them how God had brought judgments on their fathers. It was therefore to provoke God most wantonly, when they overlooked and disregarded such dreadful vengeances as he had executed on their progenitors. We shall hereafter see similar declarations; nay, this way of speaking occurs everywhere in the prophets, that is, that their race had been from the beginning perverse and rebellious, and that they had also in all ages despised the favor of God and obstinately resisted the prophets.

But God reminds them here, that from the day they came forth from the land of Egypt he had never ceased to speak to them even to the time of Jeremiah: this his perseverance greatly aggravated the sin of the people. Had God spoken only once, it would have been sufficient for their condemnation: but inasmuch as he had borne with their perverse conduct, and never ceased from day to day kindly to call them to himself and to promise them pardon and to offer salvation to them --- inasmuch then as God had thus persevered, the more fully discovered was the irreclaimable impiety of the people. We indeed know how dreadful a punishment must await those who dare thus to abuse the forbearance of God and openly to scorn his word, when he invites them a hundred or a thousand times to repentance.

He afterwards adds, that he had sent all his servants, [208] etc In the same sense is to be taken the universal particle, {כל}, cal, ``all.'' Had God sent only one prophet, there would have remained no excuse for the Israelites; but as he had continually sent one after another, to train them up like an army, how great was their madness to despise so large a number? We indeed know that there were never wanting prophets among the people, as Moses had promised in the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy. As then God had dealt bountifully with the people, so that prophets had never ceased but continually succeeded one another, hence surely the baseness of their impious obstinacy became more evident; for they had not despised God only for one day, nor disregarded one prophet, or two or three, but resisted all the prophets, though they had been sent in great number. I sent, he says, all my servants

Then he adds, daily This is mentioned for the same purpose, even to shew that God had never been wearied, and that they had resisted as it were designedly his goodness, while he was incessant in kindly exhorting them to repentance. He says, by rising early and sending As we have said elsewhere, the verb {שכם}, shecam, properly means to rise early. God here commends the authority of prophetic instruction by ascribing to himself what is done by men. With him, indeed, as we all know, there is no change; hence the expression, to rise up, as applied to him, is not strictly true; but what he commanded his servants to do, he transfers, as we have said, to himself, in order that he might more sharply reprove the ingratitude of the people; as though he had said, that he had been most carefully attentive to secure their salvation, but that they had been torpid and wholly indifferent.

We may hence learn a useful doctrine, --- that God rises to invite us, and also to receive us, whenever his word is proclaimed among us, by which he testifies to us his paternal love. God then not only employs men to lead us to himself, but comes forth in a manner himself to meet us, and rises early as one solicitous for our salvation. This commendation of divine truth may be of great benefit to the faithful, and induce them to recumb confidently and with tranquil minds on God's promises; for they are the same as though God himself had spoken them to us. But here is also reproved the impiety of those who slumber and sleep, while God thus watches in order to promote their salvation, and who lend not an ear, when he rises early to come to them in order to draw them to himself.

He afterwards subjoins, And they hearkened not There is here a change of person; for he said in the last verse, ``your fathers,'' ``I sent to you;'' but now he says, They hearkened not, nor inclined their ear It is indeed true, that the reference is to the fathers; but in the next verse God includes the people who were then living. There is then no doubt but that it was an evidence of indignation, that he changed the person, and that he was wearied in addressing them, for he saw that he spoke in vain to a stupid people: and this will appear evident from the next verse. They hearkened not,

[208] The former part of this verse would better connect with the former verse, than with this sentence. There is the copulative {ו,} ``and,'' before the verb ``sent.'' The sending of the prophets is mentioned in addition to the first command given to them. The passage may be thus rendered, --- And they went backward and not forward, 25. From the day in which your fathers came forth From the land of Egypt, to this day: And I sent to you all my servants the prophets, Every day rising early and sending; 26. Yet they hearkened not to me, Nor inclined their ear, But hardened their neck; They have been more wicked than their fathers. Such is the connection in all the ancient versions and in the Targum. The verb, rendered ``they have been more wicked,`` or ``done worse,`` is omitted by the Septuagint and the Syriac; but retained by the Vulgate and the Targum, and is found wanting in no MS. --- Ed.

he says, nor inclined their ear The words we have already explained: the Jews are here precluded from having any excuse on the ground of error or ignorance; for they had refused to be taught, they would not attend, but on the contrary made deaf their cars. And he says also, that they hardened their neck; by which their perverseness is still more fully expressed: they designedly as it were despised God, and carried on war even with his favor and kindness. And he concludes by saying, that they had done worse than their fathers He had said, ``your fathers;'' but now, ``their fathers.'' We hence see that the sentence is changed, for God knew that he could produce no effect on them, as we find by what follows ---

Jeremiah 7:27

27. Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee.

27. Et dices illis omnia verba haec, et non audient to (vel, non auscultabunt tibi,) et clamabis ad eos, et non respondebunt tibi.

Here is seen more clearly what I have stated, --- that the Jews were not addressed, because they had no ears. Here then God addresses his Prophet and says, ``The children will be like their parents: for thou shalt indeed bear the commands which I give thee, but it will be without any advantage; for they will not hear, and when thou callest to them, they will not answer'' It was a most grievous trial to the Prophet to know that his words would pass away with the air and produce no good. What was to be expected but that God's wrath would thus be still more kindled against the people? The Prophet then must have had his mind greatly depressed; for he doubtless labored for the good of his own nation; and we shall hereafter see how sad he was when he understood that their final ruin was at hand. But, as we have said elsewhere, the prophets were influenced by two feelings: for they did not divest themselves of all human affections, inasmuch as they loved their own nation and felt great sorrow, when God declared that he was coming to execute judgment: but this sympathy and sorrow did not prevent them from executing, in a bold manner, and with unshaken zeal, what God had committed to them. Thus then the prophets had feelings to condole with their own kindred, and at the same time were enabled to surmount whatever might check or hinder them from performing their office. Jeremiah did thus condole with his own nation, when he knew that shortly ruin would overtake them; but yet he felt bound to execute what God had bidden him to do, and to obey his call.

However bitter therefore was the declaration, Thou shalt speak to them, but they will not hear, yet Jeremiah went forth; for he knew that he must obey God's command, whatever might be the issue. The same resolution ought to be formed at this day by all the faithful ministers of God. They ought to strive as far as they can to promote the salvation of the people; but still when they see that their doctrine succeeds not as they wish, and that it is the savor of death to the whole world, they ought nevertheless to follow their course: why? because they are always a sweet and good savor to God, whatever may be the event. God then declares to his servant what would be the issue, in order that he might not cease to execute his office with invincible courage, even if no fruit appeared. It was also his purpose to shew

before the time to the people their perverseness, if there was possibly any hope, or at least, that he might doubly prove them to be unhealable. It was further his design to consult the good of those few who cherished true religion in their hearts, though the multitude were running headlong to their own ruin.

In like manner at this day it is necessary thus to sustain the souls of the faithful; for while the ungodly rave against God, and while almost the whole world is seized with this madness, what would become of the godly, had they not this fact to think of, --- that it is nothing new for hypocrites, who boast that they are God's people and his Church, to reject his grace and to regard as nothing his servants. This truth then is serviceable to us at this day, and may be applied in the same way, so that our minds may not despond nor vacillate, when we see the majority of those, whom God addresses by his servants, heedless and deaf. Thou shalt speak to them, he says, all these words

He says not without a reason, All these words; for if the Prophet had only briefly declared to them what he had heard from God's mouth, he might have discharged his office with less weariness; but when he had often repeated what had been committed to him, it was not done without great trouble and sorrow; for as we have said at the beginning, he spent his labor on the people, not for one year or for ten years; for he preached to them for twenty, thirty, forty years, and pursued his course even beyond that time. When he saw the truth of God thus rejected by the people, how could he otherwise than feel weariness at times? It is therefore not in vain intimated, as I have said, that he was chosen, that he might try, not only for one day, or for a few months or years, whether he could recover the people to the way of salvation, but that he was to go on through all obstacles, so as not to faint, whatever might take place. They will not hear thee, he says: and further, ---

Thou shalt call to them, and they will not answer thee This also, which God foretells him, is emphatical, --- that if the Prophet called most loudly, (as Isaiah is bidden to do, (Isaiah 58:1,) and in his person all teachers,) and called even to hoarseness, yet he is told they would not answer. This shews still more fully their perverseness; for they were not only deaf to God's voice and neglected plain teaching, but also disregarded the most vehement exhortations, he then adds ---

Jeremiah 7:28

28. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

28. Et dices ad eos, Haec gens, quae non audierunt vocem Jehovae Dei sui, et non receperunt disciplinam; periit veritas et excisa est ab ore eorum.

God shews now that he must act in a new way. The first duty of teachers is to set forth the will of God, to shew what is right, and then to exhort, if plain teaching proves not sufficient. But God intimates here that he was under the necessity to change his manner, because they were wholly irreclaimable. Thou shalt then say this as the last thing; as though he had said, ``I indeed wished to try, whether they were capable of being improved, and have employed thee for this purpose: after having long borne with them, knowing by a long trial that thy labor is useless, thou shalt say to them, ``I

bid you adieu at last.'' For what is the meaning of these words, This is a nation which heard not the voice of its God, except that the Prophet, after long trials, knew that he was neither to teach nor exhort them? It is not to be doubted but that God referred to the Jews themselves; for it was his object to expose their impious perverseness. He yet comforted his servant; for he hence knew, that though he could do no good to his hearers, yet his labor was acceptable to God and not without its fruit: for the truth of God is not only fruitful in the salvation of men, but also in their perdition. (2 Corinthians 2:15, 16.) God then shews, that there would be no loss to his servant, even though the Jews repented not; for he would be their judge, and denounce by the highest authority their destruction.

We now perceive the design of the Holy Spirit, in saying, Thou shalt at length say, This is a nation which has not hearkened to the voice of its God: for the Prophet is not bidden here to address the Jews, but to pronounce on them a sentence, that the whole world might know how base and detestable had been their contumacy, and how abominable their impiety; for the whole nation had refused to hear The word nation seems here to be taken in a bad sense: it is indeed in many places to be taken for ``people;'' but in other places Scripture sets {גוים}, guim, in opposition to God's chosen people. And perhaps this word has been used, that the Jews might know that they in vain gloried in their own dignity. He shews that they did not excel other nations, for they were themselves of the same class, a nation. This is a nation, he says, which has not hearkened to the voice of Jehovah their God [209] In saying this he doubtless amplified their crime; for as God had made himself plainly known to the Jews, they could not pretend ignorance nor plead any doubt respecting what the prophets taught. As then they had designedly rejected their own God, they hence became more obviously guilty and abominable.

He afterwards adds, They have not received correction, he points out the very source of rebellion, --- they were unwilling to undertake the yoke. Here then he excludes all those plausible pretences by which the Jews might cloak their impiety, as hypocrites are ever wont to do. Hence he declares that they had been unteachable, for they had refused correction. The word {מוסר}, musar, often means chastisement; but generally signifies every kind of training. As the subject here is teaching, the Prophet means that they were willfully blind, for they would not be taught; Now this is the extremity of wicked perverseness, that is, when men become so degenerated, that they willfully assimilate themselves to brute beasts by rejecting the yoke of God.

He then subjoins, that truth, or faith, had perished The word {אמונה}, amune, may be taken in two senses. Some refer it to what belongs to God, as meaning religion, or faith: or piety. But the Prophet seems to take it in a larger sense, as signifying what is sincere; for they acted perfidiously towards men as well as towards God. The word then is to be taken simply as meaning integrity, as though he had said, that nothing true or sincere remained in them, but that they were so corrupt that they mocked God and deceived men, and that nothing but dissimulation prevailed among them.

[209] Our version is wrong, “obeyeth not;” for the charge against them is, that they did not attend or give ear to God’s voice: they would not hear it any more than the Papists at this day. This is evident from the previous verse. — Ed.

This meaning is confirmed by what follows, that it is cut off from their mouth [210] We hence learn that their perfidy is condemned because they acted falsely; and as their heart was full of duplicity, so also was their tongue. He intimates, in short, that there was no hope as to their repentance; for had they promised a hundred times to God to be teachable and obedient, and shewed before the world any appearance of integrity, their promises would have passed off into mere fallacies and deceptions. He then adds ---

Jeremiah 7:29

29. Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.

29. Tonde comam tuam et projice et attolle super excelsa lamentationem; quid reprobavit (vel, vilipendit; sed verbum reprobandi magis placet hoc loco) Jehova, et reliquit aetatem indignationis suae.

Here again Jeremiah exhorts his own people to lament; and he uses the feminine gender, as though he called the people, the daughter of Sion, or the daughter of Jerusalem. He then, according to a common mode of speaking, calls the whole people a woman. [211]

He first bids her to shave off the hair The word {נזר}, nesar, means the hair, derived from the Nazarites, who allowed their hair to grow: and there may be here a striking allusion to the Nazarites who were sacred to God; as though he had said, ``This people are profane, and therefore ought to have nothing in common with the Nazarites.'' Hence also is derived {נזר}, nesar, a crown. Though then the word means the hair, yet the allusion is not to be overlooked, --- that this people, rejected by God, are bidden to cut off and to throw away the hair. After the throwing away of the hair there was to be great lamentation; Raise, he says, on high places a lamentation This may seem to be an exhortation to repentance: but as we have seen elsewhere, though the prophets often gave the people the hope of pardon and reconciliation, yet in this place the Prophet no doubt denounces a final judgment, and is a herald of lamentation, because the prevailing impiety was irreclaimable. He does not then perform here the duty of a teacher, but in a hostile manner denounces ruin: for it immediately follows ---

For rejected hath Jehovah and forsaken the generation of his wrath The word {דור}, dur, means an age, not time, but men of the same age: as we call that our generation which now lives in the world, and that which is dead the generation of our fathers, and what succeeds us the next generation. It is indeed true, that the Israelites in every age were worthy of a similar vengeance; but God no doubt shews here, that his vengeance was at hand, for he had long borne with the perverse conduct of the people, and suspended his judgment. As then vengeance was now to

[210] All the ancient versions and the Targum render {by{אמונה {πίστις}, fides --- faith, fidelity or faithfulness. The first verb, ``perished'' or lost, is omitted by the Septuagint and Arabic, but is retained by the Vulgate, Syriac, and the Targum. The second verb is stronger than the first; faithfulness was lost from the mouth, yea, it was completely separated from it. Lost is faithfulness, yea, wholly separated from the mouth.

[211] The emendations of Houbigant, adopted by Blayney, are by no means to be approved; for without the authority of any MSS. or versions, he changes the gender of these verbs in succession. It is a common thing in the prophets to call the people the daughter of Sion: and probably they are here so addressed, because the hair is an ornament to a female, and to cut it off is a token of deep distress. — Ed.

be executed, the Prophet calls that age the age of God's wrath; for we know that the genitive case in Hebrew has often such a meaning as this. Then the age of his wrath means the age or generation devoted to extreme vengeance; for their wickedness against God was extreme, as long as he treated them with forbearance. The longer then he had deferred his judgment, the heavier punishment was at hand. It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 7:30

30. For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the Lord: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it.

30. Quoniam fecerunt filii Jehudah malum in oculis meis, dicit Jehova: posuerunt abominationes suas in domo, super quam invocatum est nomen meum, ad polluendam ipsam.

Lest the Jews should murmur and complain that God was too rigorous, the Prophet adds, that they were not given up to destruction without the justest reasons. How so? They had done evil To do evil here means, that they had not offended in one thing, but had given themselves up to wickedness and evil doings. It is the same as though he had said, that they were so corrupt that they were wholly inured to the doing of evil, and had by long use contracted evil habits; for they continually provoked God. But as they flattered themselves, the Prophet reminds them here of God's judgment: ``It is enough, ``he says, ``that the Judge condemns you; for if ye see not your wickedness nor acknowledge your sin, yet this will not avail you; for God declares that you are guilty in his sight.''

We see that there is an implied contrast between the sight of God and the delusions by which hypocrites soothed themselves, while they made evasions or perversely excused their sins, or sought to escape by circuitous windings. God then shews that his own sight, or knowledge, is sufficient, how blind soever man may be, and however the whole world may connive at their sins.

He adds one kind of sin, that they had set up their abominations [212] in the Temple. This refers to superstitions. But as we have seen elsewhere, and shall often have to observe, the Prophets frequently reproved sins by mentioning only one sin for the whole. Then what was especially wicked in the people he states, and that was, that the Temple was polluted with superstitions. We have already said, that it was an intolerable sacrilege to pollute the Temple with abominations, which was then the only true Temple in the world: for it was God's will that sacrifices should be offered to him in that one place; and he had carefully described everything necessary for a right worship. When, therefore, the Jews polluted that very Temple, how abominable was such a profanation? It was not then without reason that the Prophet brings forward what was especially wicked in the people, --- that God's house was polluted with superstitious and many spurious ceremonies, and that there his whole worship

[212] The word means what is unclean and filthy, “their filthy things.” They were the idols which were introduced into the Temple. They did this evil “before his eyes,“ or in his presence, as the Temple was his habitation. They brought idols as it were into his very presence, and thereby literally violated the first commandment, which expressly forbad them to have other gods before him or in his presence. By what means did they evade this explicit command? In the same way as the Church of Rome justifies idolatry, — that idols are helps to devotion: but God regards them as abominations. — Ed.

was vitiated. The rest to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou so constantly invitest us, daily and even hourly, to thyself, we may not give thee occasion to complain, as of thy people of old, that we are deaf and thus neglect thy holy admonitions, but that we may be teachable and submissive to thee, and that, as thou risest early, we may also be ready to meet thee, and be obedient to thee, not only for one day, but persevere through life in the same course, until at length we shall reach that blessed rest, prepared for us in heaven by Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirty-First

Jeremiah 7:31

31. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.

31. Et aedificavit excelsa Topheth, quae in valle filii Hinnom, ut comburerent filios suos et filias suas igni; quod non mandavi, et non ascendit super cor meum.

Jeremiah in this verse also inveighs against those superstitions by which the Jews had corrupted the true and pure worship of God. He says, that they had builded high places, which was prohibited in the law. (Leviticus 26:30.) Now God, as it has been before said, prefers obedience to all sacrifices, (1 Samuel 15:22:) hence the Prophet justly condemned them, that they forsook the Temple and built for themselves high places or groves, and also altars.

He then mentions one particular place, even Tophet in the valley of Hinnom The prophets, in order to render the place detestable, no doubt designated the infernal regions by {תפת}, Tophet, and {הנם} {גיא}, gia enom. For when Isaiah speaks, in the thirtieth chapter, of the eternal punishment of the wicked, he mentions Tophet, which is the same word as we find here. As to the valley of Hinnom, it is called in Greek Gehenna, and is taken to designate eternal death, or the torments which await all the wicked. In a similar manner the word Paradise is metaphorically taken for the blessed state and for the eternal inheritance; for God so placed man at first in that eastern garden, that he might in a manner protect him under his own wings. As then the blessing and favor of God shone on that place where Adam first dwelt, that it might be a certain image of celestial life and of true happiness, so they called the glory, prepared for all God's children in heaven, Paradise. So also on the other hand the prophets called hell {הנם} {גיא}, gia enom, in order that the Jews might detest those impious and sacrilegious modes of worship by which their fathers had polluted themselves. And for the same reason they call hell, Tophet. The ancients also say, that it was a place in the suburbs of the city. They were not wont then to assemble afar off for the sake of these abominations, since the place was within sight of the Temple, and they knew that there was the only true altar approved by God, and that it was not lawful to offer sacrifices anywhere else. Since they knew this, and God had set such a place before their eyes, the greater was their madness, when they preferred a filthy spot in which to worship God according to their own will, or rather according to their own wantonness.

Of this so great an audacity Jeremiah now complains: They builded for themselves high places, in Tophet, even in the valley He introduces the word son; but it is called {גיא} {הנם}, gia enom, the valley of Hinnom; whence comes the word Gehenna, as we have already said.

He adds, that they might burn their sons and their daughters It was a horrible and prodigious madness for parents not to spare their own children, but to cast them into the fire; for they must have been so seized with a diabolic fury as to divest themselves of all human feelings: and yet they had a plausible reason, as they supposed; for it was a zeal worthy of all praise to prefer God to their own children. When therefore they cast their children into the fire, this kind of zeal might have deceived the simple; and to this was added a pretext derived from example, for Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his own son. But it hence appears what men will do when they are led away by an inconsiderate zeal; for from the beginning of the world the source of all superstitions has been this, --- that men have devised for themselves various modes of worship, and have given themselves the liberty to seek a way of their own to pacify God.

As to the pretended example, they were so blind as not to distinguish between themselves and Abraham; for he was commanded to offer his son, (Genesis 22:2;) but they, without any command, attempted to do the same thing; this was extreme presumption. As to Abraham, he obeyed God; and he could not have been led astray, when he knew that such a sacrifice was approved by God. But when the Jews emulated his zeal, it was an extreme folly; and they were especially culpable, because they neglected God's command and wholly disregarded it. They were, however, so far carried away by their own wantonness as to cast their own children into the fire, and under the pretense of piety: so great and so savage a cruelty prevailed among them. We hence perceive that there is no end of sinning, when men give themselves up to their own inventions; for God surrenders those to Satan, that they may be led by the spirit of giddiness and of madness and of stupidity. Let us therefore learn ever to regard what God approves: and let this be the very beginning of our inquiry, whenever we undertake anything, whether God commands it; and this course ought especially to be observed with regard to his worship; for, as it has been already stated, religion is especially founded on faith, and faith is based on the word of God: and hence it is here added ---

Which I commanded them not, and which never came to my mind This reason ought to be carefully noticed, for God here cuts off from men every occasion for making evasions, since he condemns by this one phrase, ``I have not commanded them,'' whatever the Jews devised. There is then no other argument needed to condemn superstitions, than that they are not commanded by God: for when men allow themselves to worship God according to their own fancies, and attend not to his commands, they pervert true religion. And if this principle was adopted by the Papists, all those fictitious modes of worship, in which they absurdly exercise themselves, would fall to the ground. It is indeed a horrible thing for the Papists to seek to discharge their duties towards God by performing their own superstitions. There is an immense number of them, as it is well known, and as it manifestly appears. Were

they to admit this principle, that we cannot rightly worship God except by obeying his word, they would be delivered from their deep abyss of error. The Prophet's words then are very important, when he says, that God had commanded no such thing, and that it never came to his mind; as though he had said, that men assume too much wisdom, when they devise what he never required, nay, what he never knew. It is indeed certain, that there was nothing hid from God, even before it was done: but God here assumes the character of man, as though he had said, that what the Jews devised was unknown to him, as his own law was sufficient.

Now, as the words Tophet and Gehenna were so stigmatized by the prophets, we may hence learn how displeasing to God is every idolatry and profanation of his true and pure worship: for he compares these notorious places in which the Jews performed so sedulously their devotions, to the infernal regions. And hence at this day, when the Papists boast of what they call their devotions, we may justly say, that there are as many gates, through which they throw themselves headlong into hell, as there are modes of worship devised by them for the purpose of conciliating God. It follows ---

Jeremiah 7:32

32. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place.

32. Propterea, Ecce dies veniunt, dicit Jehova, et non dicetur (hoc est, quibus non dicetur) Topheth et vallis filii Hinnom, sed vallis occisionis; et sepelient Topheth, quia non erit locus.

The Prophet denounces a punishment, though the Jews thought that they deserved a reward. The case is the same with the Papists at this day, who thoughtlessly boast, when they heap together many abominations; for they think that God is bound as it were by a law, not to overlook so much diligence. But the Prophet shews how grossly deceived they are who worship God superstitiously, without the authority of his word; for he threatens them here with the heaviest judgment, --- Called no more, he says, shall it be Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom; but The valley of slaughter shall it be called; for the whole land was to be filled with slaughters.

He adds, Bury shall they there, for elsewhere there will be no place [213] He intimates that so great would be the slaughters, that Jerusalem would not contain the dead: hence, he says, graves will be made in Tophet; and many also will be slain there. A dead body, we know, was unclean by the Law; and it was not lawful to offer sacrifices to God near graves. (Numbers 19:11, 16.) The Prophet then shows, that when the Jews foolishly consecrated that place to God, they committed a dreadful profanation, for that place was to be wholly filled with dead bodies, and polluted also by the slaughter of men. We hence see what the superstitious do when they follow their own devices --- that they provoke God's wrath; for by the grievousness of the punishment we may form a judgment as to the degree in which God abominates all

[213] This is the meaning according to all the ancient versions and the Targum. The Syriac is, "for want of place." Gataker gives the same meaning. Our version follows Pagninus, and is substantially adopted by Blayney both here and in Jeremiah 19:11. Literally it is, "From no place," that is, "From there being no place," as Calvin says elsewhere. — Ed.

false modes of worship, which men devise without the warrant of his law; for we must ever remember this principle, I commanded it not, nor hath it ever come to my mind It follows ---

Jeremiah 7:33

33. And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away.

33. Et erit cadaver populi hujus in cibum avi coelorum (avibus) et bestiae terrae (hoc est, bestiis) nec erit qui absterreat (hoc est, qui terrore abigat.)

Jeremiah threatens them with something more grievous than death itself, --- that God would impress the marks of his wrath even on their dead bodies. It is indeed true what a heathen poet says,

``That the loss of a grave is not great,'' (Virgil, aeneid;)

but we must on the other hand remember that burying has been held as a sacred custom in all ages; for it was a symbol of the last resurrection. Barbarous then were the words, ``Give me a stick, if you fear that birds will eat my dead body;'' as the cynic, who had ordered his body to be cast into the field, derided what was said in answer to him, ``The wild beasts and birds will devour thee:'' ``Oh,'' said he, ``let me have a stick, and I will drive them away;'' intimating by such a saying, that he would then be without any feeling; but he shewed that he entertained no hope of immortality. But it was God's will that the custom of burying should prevail among all nations, that in death itself there might be some evidence or intimation of the last resurrection. When therefore the Prophet declares here and in other places that the Jews would be without a burial, he doubtless enhances the vengeance of God.

We indeed know that some of the most holy men had not been buried; for the prophets were sometimes exposed to wild beasts and birds: and the whole Church complains in Psalm 79:2, that the dead bodies of the saints were exposed and became food for birds and wild beasts. This has sometimes happened; for God often mixes the good with the evil in temporal punishments, as he makes his sun to rise on the good and the evil: but yet of itself and for the most part, it is an evidence of a curse, when a man's body is cast away without any burial.

It is this then that the Prophet means when he says, The carcase of this people shall be meat for the birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth, and there will be none to terrify them; [214] that is, there will be no one to perform the humane office of driving the beasts away, the very thing which nature itself would lead one to do. If any one now objects and says, that in this case the faithful could not be distinguished from the reprobate, the answer is plainly this, --- that when the honor of a burial is denied to the faithful, God will become the avenger. But this does not prove that God does not in this way inflict a visible punishment on the reprobate, and thus expose them to reproach by whom he has been despised. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 7:34

34. Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of

[214] The poetical singular is used throughout the verse, — And the carcase of this people shall be for meat To the bird of heaven and to the beast of the earth, And there will be no terrifier. — Ed.

Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate.

34. Et cessare faciam ex urbibus Jehudah et ex compitis Jerusalem vocem gaudii et vocem laetitiae, vocem sponsi et vocem sponsae; quia in vastitatem erit (hoc est, redigetur) terra.

He still continues the same subject; for he denounces on the Jews the punishment which they had deserved. He more fully expresses what he mentioned in the last verse respecting the shameful and dreadful barbarity that would follow the slaughter; for the whole country would not only be harassed by the enemy, but wholly laid waste: for when sounds of joy and gladness cease, all places are filled with lamentations; and when no marriages are celebrated, it is a sign of devastation.

But by marriage, the Prophet, stating a part for the whole, understands whatever was necessary for the preservation of society; it is the same as though he had said, ``There shall be now no marrying:'' for without marriages the human race cannot continue. Hence this cessation would be the same, as though he had said, that they would be wholly regardless of all those things necessary to perpetuate mankind. He thus adds nothing new, but expands what we have before observed, --- that the whole land would be filled with dead bodies, and that there would be such lamentation as to deter men from all their usual and ordinary habits: he afterwards shews more fully the same thing.

Chapter 8

CHAPTER 8

Jeremiah 8:1-2

1. At that time, saith the Lord, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves:

1. In die illo, dicit Jehova, extrahent ossa regum Jehudah et ossa principum ejus, et ossa sacerdotum, et ossa prophetarum, et ossa civium Jerosolymae (habitantium,) e sepulchris suis;

2. And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.

2. Et expendent coram sole et luna et toto exercitu coelorum, quae dilexerunt (nam relativum neutrum comprehendit et solem et lunam et exercitum; vel, si magis placeat vertere, quos exercitus dilexerunt,) et quibus servierunt, et post quos ambularunt, et quos quaesierunt, et coram quibus prostrati sunt (hoc est, se inclinarunt;) neque colligentur, et non sepelientur, in stercus in terrae superficie erunt.

I Have said that Jeremiah repeats in the first verse what he had before said, --- that the Jews would be deprived of their graves, in order that there might be on the dead a mark of God's vengeance; as though he had said, that after having been destroyed by the hand of enemies, they would have their punishment extended farther by having their dead bodies exposed to the wild beasts and birds. The faithful, as I have said, suffer no loss, when burial is denied them; but yet they do not disregard burial, inasmuch as it is a badge of the resurrection. Though God suffers them to be involved in this disgrace with the reprobate, yet this does not hinder but that God should execute his vengeance on the wicked by such a temporal punishment as

turns to a blessing to the faithful. It is therefore no unmeaning denunciation, when the Prophet says that the time was at hand, when their bones would be taken out of their graves.

He mentions the bones of kings, and of priests, and of prophets, and of the whole people The kings thought that as soon as they were hid in their graves, their dead bodies would be deemed sacred: the same notion prevailed as to rulers, priests, and prophets: but he says that no grave would be untouched or free from the outrage of enemies; and thus he shews, that the city would be rooted up from its foundations. Were the city to remain safe, the graves would be spared. Hence this punishment could not have been inflicted, without the very foundations of the city being dug up by the enemies. In short, he points out here a dreadful and final overthrow; and at the same time he shews the reason why God would manifest such severity towards the Jews.

It was, because they served the sun, and the moon, and the stars It was God's just vengeance, that their bones should be taken from their graves, in order that the sun and moon and all the stars might be witnesses of his judgment. By these words Jeremiah indirectly reprobates the senselessness of the people for thinking that they performed an acceptable service to the sun and moon. He therefore says, that all the stars and the planets would become as it were spectators of the vengeance which God would execute; as though he had said, that the whole celestial host would approve of that punishment; for nothing is more detestable to creatures, than when the glory of their Maker is ascribed to them. It is indeed true that the sun, moon, and stars are without sense or reason; but the Prophet here attributes reason to them, in order that he might shake off from the Jews that stupidity in which they hardened themselves, while they thought that they were rendering to the sun an acceptable service. At the same time he alludes, as it appears also from other places, to the punishment inflicted on adulterers: for when a harlot is drawn out and led forth in contempt and disgrace in the presence of her adulterers, it is deemed a most just punishment. And thus as the Jews had as it were committed adultery with the sun and the moon and the stars, so the Prophet says here, that their disgrace and baseness would be made manifest in the sight of the sun, and the moon, and the stars.

He says, which they have loved He no doubt alludes to the blind ardor by which idolaters were possessed, when they zealously pursued their illicit devotions; for it was a species of an unbridled and mad passion, as it appears from other places; for no fornicator burns with a more impetuous lust after a woman, than idolaters do, when Satan dazzles their eyes and fascinates their hearts. Of this impure love then does the Prophet now speak; and at the same time, he indirectly condemns the Jews for having alienated themselves without a cause from God, who was their legitimate husband. There is indeed nothing less tolerable than for men thus perfidiously to forsake God, when he has invited them to himself, and contracted as it were with them a holy and an inviolable marriage.

He afterwards adds, whom they have served This was still more base; they devoted themselves to the work of serving the sun, the moon, and the stars. He men-

tions in the third place, that they walked after them. God had shewn them the right way, and had commanded them to follow him: but they forsook God, says the Prophet, and followed the stars of heaven. He states in the fourth place, that they sought them. By this he refers to their perverseness. Some render the word ``consulted,'' of which I do not approve, for it is strained and far-fetched. [215] The Prophet, I doubt not, denotes here the persevering attention of the Jews to the objects of their worship; for they followed their idols not by a sudden and momentary impulse, but they resolutely devoted themselves to them and became as it were fixed in their wicked purpose. And he says in the last place, that they prostrated themselves before them. This was the way in which they served them. It is an evidence of reverence when men prostrate themselves before their idols; and thus they serve them, for it is an act of worship. The Prophet might indeed have sufficiently expressed in one sentence the impiety of the people; but he joins together several sentences for the sake of amplification, in order that he might render more evident the ingratitude of the people in seeking for themselves unknown gods, and in setting up false and fictitious modes of worship, rather than to render obedience to the only true God and to acquiesce in his law, which is a certain rule, and never leads any astray. [216]

He afterwards adds, They shall not be gathered, nor be buried; for dung shall they be on the face or surface of the land He confirms what he had said of the punishment before mentioned, --- that they had acted disdainfully towards God, and had prostrated themselves before their idols, so after death they would be made base and detestable, so that the mind would revolt at such a hateful sight. This is the meaning. It follows ---

Jeremiah 8:3

3. And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the Lord of hosts.

3. Et eligetur (ad verbum esset, electa est) mors (sed debet resolvi in futurum tempus) prae vita ab omnibus reliquiis, quae residuae erunt ab hac prava natione (a natione hac mala) in omnibus locis ubi residui fuerint, ad quae expulero eos (ad quae illuc; sed {שם}, est supervacuum,) dicit Jehova exercituum.

He intimates in this verse, that all survivors would be doubly miserable, as it would be better for them to die at once than to pine away in unceasing evils: for they who give another meaning to the words, seem not to understand the design

[215] Though it be improper to render the word "consult;" yet the meaning is the same: they sought them, that is, their counsel and direction. They sought them in all emergencies. "To inquire of the Lord," in Genesis 25:22, is literally "to seek the Lord;" and "to inquire of God," in Exodus 18:15, is literally "to seek God." Indeed, to inquire of or to ask, that is, counsel, seems to be the most common meaning of the word. "Sought," is the Vulgate and Targum, — "consulted," is the Syriac, — and "cleaved to," is the Septuagint and Arabic; and this is the idea of Calvin. — Ed.

[216] It would be better to render {before{אמונה the verbs here as an adverb, because, as, or inasmuch as. There is a pronoun following every verb, --- 2. And they shall expose them to the sun, And to the moon, and to all the host of heaven: As they had loved them, and as they had served them, And as they had walked after them, And as they had sought them, And as they had bowed down to them, They shall not be gathered, nor buried; For dung on the face of the land shall they be. The order here is from the principle to the action, and not the contrary, as is often the case: love --- service --- walking according to the rules prescribed --- seeking counsel-and worshipping. --- Ed.

of the Prophet. The import then of the passage is, --- that however dreadful God's judgment would be, when slaughters everywhere prevailed, and dead bodies were drawn out which had been previously buried, yet all this would be a slight punishment in comparison with what God would inflict on the rest, such as remained alive: and he also intimates that their life would be more miserable than death itself, yea, than ten deaths.

That those then who would escape death might not think that they gained any advantage, the Prophet says, Chosen shall be death before life by all the residue We hence learn how grievous was to be God's vengeance; for nothing would be better or more desirable than to undergo death at once, as life would be nothing else but a continued languor and torment. Expected then will be death in all places in which there shall be survivors, where I shall drive them He mentions a reason for this twofold misery, --- they would not be allowed to live in their own country, but would become aliens, --- and they would find in their exile God's hand against them, and as it were following them everywhere. [217]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou terrifiest us daily with thy judgments, and as it is needful for our sloth to be stimulated, and for our corruption to be thus corrected, --- O grant, that we may be moved by thy threatenings, and at the same time suffer ourselves to be kindly invited by thee, and make such progress in thy word, that, being terrified by threatenings, we may also readily and willingly obey whenever thou in a paternal manner callest us to thyself, and labor in every way to devote ourselves wholly to thee, by subduing the corrupt affections of our flesh, so that nothing may hinder us to be submissive to thy will, until we shall at length enjoy the rest of that eternal inheritance, which thou hast promised to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirty-Second

Jeremiah 8:4-5

4. Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return?

4. Et dices ad eos, Sic dicit Jehova, An qui ceciderunt non resurgent? si quis aversus fuerit non revertetur?

5. Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.

5. Quare rebellis est populus hic Jerosolymae rebellione perpetua? (forti, ad verbum;) adhaeserunt fraudi (vel, apprehenderunt fraudem,) noluerunt reverti.

Though God had reminded his Prophet of the event, yet he still invites the Jews to repentance; not that there was any hope of restoring them to a right mind, (for he had said that they were wholly irreclaimable,) but that their perverseness might be

[217] The literal rendering of this verse is as follows, — And chosen shall be death rather than life by all the remnant, — Who shall remain of this wicked family, In all the places of such as shall remain, Whither I shall have driven them, Saith Jehovah of hosts. Blayney justly observes, that the participle in the second line is in apposition with "remnant," as explanatory of it, and is not to be put in the genitive case, as in our version. A similar construction is found in Jeremiah 24:8. But there is no sufficient authority or reason for omitting the same participle after "places," as is done by Blayney. Such repetitions are common in the prophets. — Ed.

less excusable; and it was also his object to afford some relief to the small number of the godly who still remained; for they had not all fallen away into impiety, though the great body of the people had become corrupt. God then, partly to aggravate the sin of the ungodly, and partly to provide for his faithful people, exhorts those to repentance, who were yet wholly intractable. And here we ought to consider that God's goodness, when abused, brings a much heavier judgment. God does here in a manner contend with the wickedness of his people, by setting before them the hope of pardon, if they repented.

Thou shalt then say to them; that is, ``Though I have already testified to thee that thy labor would be in vain, yet thou shalt not give over thy work.'' Shall they who have fallen rise again? This sentence is variously explained; the greater part of interpreters confine it to the Jews only, ``Shall the Jews who have fallen rise again?'' As to the second clause, some give this explanation, ``If Israel returns, will not God also return?'' that is, from his wrath, or, ``Will he not be propitious?'' Or, ``If Israel turns away, will not God also turn away?'' Others understand both parts of the sentence of the people, ``If the people have once turned away, will they not yet return to God?'' For the verb {שוב}, shub, has contrary meanings; it means, to fall away, to rebel, to go back; and it means also to return. But after having maturely considered the words and the design of the Prophet, I think it to be a general statement, as though he had said, ``When any one falls, he immediately thinks of recovering his fall; when any one deviates from the right course, being warned of his going astray, he immediately looks for the road. This is what is usually done, what then means this so great a stupidity, that the people of Jerusalem do not repent, when yet they ought to have long ago acknowledged their fall and their wanderings?''

Whoever will impartially consider the discourse of the Prophet must see that this is the real meaning; for, in the second of these verses, he says, Why is this people of Jerusalem, etc.; he now first speaks, as it clearly appears, of the people. It then follows that the former verse ought not to be applied to the people; but it contains only a general statement. In short, Jeremiah condemns here the madness of the people, because they followed not the example of those who have either fallen or deviated from the way by mistake. For it is what is naturally implanted in all, that they do not willingly perish in their misfortunes. He then who falls immediately strives to rise again; and he who leaves the right way, tries if possible to return to it again. This then is what the most foolish will do; why then, says Jeremiah, do not this people imitate such an example? He therefore shews by this comparison, that their conduct was monstrous; for they obstinately adhered to their vices, and never thought that there was a hope of reconciliation if they from the heart returned unto God. And he emphatically mentions Jerusalem; for had such obstinacy prevailed among the Chaldeans or the Egyptians, it would indeed have been inexcusable; but not so strange as among a people to whom the law had been given, and to whom God had plainly revealed the way of salvation. When, therefore, this people so hardened themselves as to reject all warnings, was it not monstrous? [218]

[218] Most agree in this view,-Gataker, Venema, Henry, Lowth, Blayney, and Scott. All the versions favor this view, giving two different meanings to {,{שוב repeated in the last clause, except the Syriac, which gives this version, ``Though they ought to repent, they yet do not repent.'' --- Ed

Then he says, that they were rebellious with a pertinacious rebellion; that is, that they forsook God not only through levity or want of thought, or some sudden impulse, but so pertinaciously, that the prophets spent their labor in vain in teaching and exhorting them. Hence he calls it a strong rebellion, though the word may be taken here as in other places in the sense of perpetual And he assigns the cause, because they laid hold on deception, that is, they adhered fast to deception. But the Prophet means by deception, not that by which a neighbor is deceived or circumvented, but hypocrisy, by which men so blind themselves, that they are unwilling either to attend to God's word, or to open their eyes to see the light. When, therefore, men through willful obstinacy bury themselves in darkness, they may be said to lay fast hold on deception [219]

David says, in Psalm 32:2, that the man is blessed in whose spirit there is no guile: he entertains no guile, as we commonly do. Now, to entertain guile is to possess a deceitful heart. He had before said that they are blessed whose sins are forgiven and to whom iniquity is not imputed: he adds by way of explanation, provided there be no guile in the spirit; and why? Because wicked men seem to themselves to be blessed, for they perceive not their own misery, because they are enveloped in their own coverings: and this is the guile of which David speaks. According to the same meaning, our Prophet says, that those laid fast hold on deception, who were so involved in darkness or so blinded by their lusts, as to seek to deceive God; but they deceive themselves. This then is the cause why those whom God corrects and chastises feel no penitence; for they are willfully blind, they close their eyes and deafen their ears, and seek to be deceived by the devil; they attend not to the holy warnings given them for their salvation. If then, we wish to be healed of our vices, let us ever begin in this way, --- let us carefully examine our thoughts and our motives, and not please ourselves nor deceive ourselves by empty flatteries, but strive to shake off whatever is reprehensible and vicious. The very beginning of true repentance is to renounce all deceptions and fallacies and to seek the light, which can alone discover to us our evils. It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 8:6

6. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

6. Attendi et audivi, non loquentur recte; nemo est quem poeniteat (ad verbum,

[219] The idea of revolt or apostasy is given by the ancient versions to the verb used at the beginning of the verse, and also to the noun which follows, and not that of rebellion, as by Calvin. The same meaning is given by Gataker, Venema, and Blayney; and they consider that Jerusalem is in apposition with "this people," in this manner, — Why has this people, Jerusalem, Revolted with perpetual revolt? As it has been already observed, the verb {,שוב with all its derivations, means strictly to turn, but is used in the sense of turning to or from, that is, of returning or of departing. The context is our guide. It can hardly be supposed to have these two meanings in the same passage. All agree in giving it the idea of returning, at the end of the fourth verse, and at the end of this verse, the fifth; and in the three other instances in which it occurs here, they give it the idea of turning away or departing. I am disposed to think that it has the first meaning throughout the passage. I would render these two verses thus, --- 4. Thou shalt also say to them, Thus saith Jehovah, --- Do men fall and not rise again? Does any one return and not return? --- 5. Why, --- often have this people returned, Jerusalem is returning continually! --- They hold fast deceit, they have refused to return. The hypocrisy of the people is the subject: they pretended to return, but did not really return; they were deceitful. It is a sort of a dialogue. The beginning of the next verse is an answer to the end of this, --- 6. I hearkened and heard, ``No:`` thus they say: Yet no man has repented of his evil, --- Saying, What have I done? Every one returns to his own course, Like a horse rushing into battle. The charge of refusing to return was negatived. --- Ed.

non vir poenitens super malo suo; sed sensus clarior est, nemo est quem poeniteat) malitiae suae, dicendo, Quid feci? omnis vertitur (ad verbum pro omnes vertuntur) ad cursos suos, sicut equus ruit (ad verbum, inundat; sed metaphorica est locutio; Sicut ergo equus praeceps ruit) in praelium.

These words may be considered as spoken by God himself, --- that he from heaven examined the state of the people; but it is more suitable to regard them as spoken by the Prophet; for he was placed, as it were, in a watch --- tower in order to observe how the people acted towards God. He now testifies, that having seen their pursuits and their doings, he saw nothing that was right. The people ought to have been more touched by these words. We indeed know how ready we are naturally to lay hold on any pretences, when we wish to continue quiet in our dregs. So the greater part are wont to object and say, ``O, indeed, thou reprovest me, but inconsiderately; for thou knowest not what is in my heart.'' Hence the Prophet says, that he had carefully examined what sort of people they were, and that he spoke of what was well known to him, and fully seen by him, ---

I have heard, he says, and attended; but they speak not rightly He means, that so far were the Jews from repenting truly and sincerely, that they did not even with their mouths profess to do so. It is less to confess sins than really to amend; but the Prophet says, that they did not even say what was right. It hence follows, that they were very far from having any serious thoughts of repentance, since they were so wanton with their tongues, or at least afforded no evidence of sorrow.

He then adds, that there was no one who repented, saying, etc. This clause is explanatory, for Jeremiah proves here more clearly that they did not speak rightly, for they did not say, What have I done? But he says first, that there was no one who repented of his wickedness He afterwards shews, that what is first necessary for repentance is, that the sinner should call himself to an account; for as long as we rest secure in our sins, it is impossible for us to repent, It is hence necessary that every one should examine himself, so as to call himself to an account, and in a manner to summon himself before God's tribunal. We then see that men can never be brought to repentance, except they set their own evils before their eyes, so as to feel ashamed, and to ask themselves, as it were in great fear, What have we done? for this question is an evidence of terror. Many, we know, formally own their sins; but this is useless, for afterwards such an acknowledgement vanishes without producing any benefit. Then real repentance necessarily requires that the sinner should not only be displeased with himself, should not only be ashamed, but that he should also be filled with terror at his own sins; for this is what is meant by the inquiry, What have I done? for it implies astonishment.

We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet's words: he says, that he did not inconsiderately reprove the people, but that he found such perversity in them that no one spoke rightly, that no one repented, because they did not consider what they were, nor examined their own lives, but slept securely in their sins.

He pursues the same subject when he says, that all turned to their own courses, that is, to their own lusts. But by the word ``courses'' the Prophet means impetuous movements; as though he had said, that the Jews were so precipitant in following

their lusts, that they in a manner ran headlong after them; and he compares them to horses rushing into battle. We know with what impetuosity horses advance when they hasten to battle; for they seem to fly, to cut the air, and to dig the ground with their hoofs. Thus the comparison is exceedingly suitable, when the Prophet says that the Jews were so impetuous in pursuing their lusts, that they rushed on, not less precipitantly than war --- horses when advancing to battle. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 8:7

7. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.

7. Etiam ciconia in coelis cognoscit tempora sua, et turtur et hirundo (alii vertunt, picam; sed nomen hirundinis est aptius, quemadmodem statim patebit,) et grues observant tempus itineris; populus autem meus non cognoscit judicium Jehovae.

Here again Jeremiah condemns the shameful insensibility of the people, --- that they had less wisdom than birds, not endued with reason and understanding. He then says, that the Jews were more foolish than cranes, swallows, and storks. He no doubt deeply wounded the feelings of the people by so severe a reproof; but it was necessary thus sharply to reprehend the despisers of God; for it appears evident by these words, that they were become exceedingly hardened in their vices. No wonder, then, that the Prophet declares that they were more silly than cranes and swallows. Isaiah also exposes the same sort of madness, when he says that the ox knew his own master, and the ass his master's crib, but that God was not known by his people. (Isaiah 1:3.) Now Isaiah made the Jews worse than oxen and asses, because these brute animals possess something like memory, so that they keep to their own manger and crib. So now Jeremiah, speaking of storks, etc., says, ---

Behold, the stork knows the time in which it ought to migrate from one country to another; and the same is observed by swallows and cranes [220] For at stated times they seek a warmer climate; that is, they leave a cold country, that they may escape the severity of winter; and they afterwards know the time in which they are to return. As, then, the birds of the air observe their seasons, how is it that my people do not consider the judgment of God? By mentioning the heavens, he no doubt alludes to the constant flying of birds, the birds having hardly any rest, for they continually rove through the air. Since, then, there is so much wisdom in birds, which yet the air wafts here and there, how comes it, that a people, who dwell quietly at home, who can leisurely meditate on God's law --- how comes it that this people understand nothing? We hence see that there is an import in the word heavens which has not been noticed. Readers may yet have their doubts; for it is nothing strange that birds in the heavens should have a clearer view, as they come nearer the sun and the element of fire: but different seems to have been the Prophet's object; which was to shew, that though birds labor as it were continually, they yet contrive to know

[220] It is curious the variety as to the names of birds in this verse, as given in the ancient versions: Vulgate; kite — turtle — swallow — stork; Septuagint, stork — turtle — swallow — sparrows; Syriac, stork — turtle — crane — swallow; Arabic, crane — turtle — swallow — birds; and the Targum is, stork — turtle — crane — swallow. The names in our versions seem to be the most correct, and are adopted by Venema and Blayney, stork — turtle — crane — swallow; the same with the Syriac and the Targum — Ed.

the suitable time for going and returning. Hence, then, is exaggerated more fully the insensibility of that people, who, while sitting leisurely at home, did not consider what God did set before them.

The particle {גם}, gam, even, is emphatical; Even the stork, he says. What means this, that birds, though not possessed of understanding, do yet know their time? But my people, etc. By saying ``my people, ``the Prophet no doubt intended more clearly to set forth their wickedness. For, as I have before said, such blindness in heathens would not have been so strange; but as they were the holy and peculiar people of God, it was far more shameful and monstrous that they knew not his judgment.

Christ uses other words in condemning the Pharisees for not attending to the time of their visitation; for he says, ``Ye are wont to conclude what will be the state of the heavens in the morning; for if the sky be red in the evening, ye say, It will be fine to --- morrow; and ye know the signs of future and approaching rain: ye possess, he says, judgment sufficiently acute in external things, which conduce to the benefit of the present life; yet ye know not the time of your visitation, and still ye seek signs: but were ye attentive, God would shew to you in a way clear enough, and as it were by the finger, that the time of deliverance which ye pretend to expect is now nigh at hand.'' But the Prophet reproves the Jews in a severer strain, when he says that there was more fatuity and madness in them than in birds. They know not, he says, the judgment of Jehovah, though it had been shewn to them many times, and for a long season.

But some one might have objected and said, ``No wonder if we perceive not God's judgment, for his judgments are a great deep; and since these exceed what we can comprehend, there is no reason to find fault with us.'' But the Prophet speaks not here of hidden judgments, which elude the comprehension of men, but of punishments, of which they had been so often warned. Since, then, they were so blind as not to see what was clear and evident, the Prophet justly says that they were more foolish than cranes, and the other birds which he mentions. It follows ---

Jeremiah 8:8

8. How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain.

8. Quomodo dicetis (pro dicitis; significat continuum actum) sapientes nos (hoc est, nos sumus sapientes,) et lex Jehovae nobiscum est (vel, penes nos, melius:) certe ecce frustra aptavit stylum (vel, calamum) scriptor; frustra sunt seribae.

Interpreters think that the Prophet here directs his words to the priests, and the false prophets, and the other chiefs of the people, because they proudly arrogated to themselves the knowledge of the law: but what is said may be no less extended to the whole people; for, as we shall presently see, all of them, from the least to the greatest, no doubt boasted that they were sufficiently wise. I hence think that the Prophet here inveighs against the whole body of the people; for all, almost without exception, rejected his teaching, as we see also to be done at the present day; for who is there that can bear to be admonished and reproved? All say that they are wise enough: ``Oh! do you think that I am a child?'' or, as it is commonly said, ``Do you think that I am a goose? I know how I am to live, and I am not without reason.''

Thus the rudest and the most ignorant set up their own wisdom and sharpness of wit against God and his prophets. Such audacity and ferociousness prevailed no doubt in the time of Jeremiah. For when he sharply reproved them, they were ready with their answer, --- ``Oh! thou treatest us as though we were barbarians, as though God's law was unknown to us, as though we had not been taught from our childhood how we are to live: does not God dwell in the midst of us?'' Since, then, the Jews did set up as it were this shield against the doctrine of the Prophet, he attacks them here with great vehemence, ---

How say ye, We are wise? He afterwards describes the kind of wisdom which they claimed, The law of God is with us: and doubtless, to attend to God's law is the way of becoming really wise. Had they justly boasted that they had the law, the Prophet would not have brought against them the charge, that they were doubly foolish. But as they falsely made this pretense, he says to them, How? and here he asks a question as to what was very strange, ``How are you so foolish, ``he says, ``that ye think yourselves wise, as though the law of God were with you? Surely, if so, in vain has the law been written; for ye shew by your whole life that you have never known anything of what God by the law commands and sets before us, and what the design of it is.''

Thus Jeremiah shows by their life that there was no ground for their foolish boasting; for they gave no evidence of their wisdom. It is indeed necessary for those who seek to be God's disciples to bring forth some fruit: but as there was among them so much impiety, so much contempt of God, and as, in short, their whole life proclaimed them to be wholly insane, he says, In vain has he prepared his pen, even the writer of the law; and in vain have been the scribes, that is, the teachers; for by scribes, in the second place, he understands teachers. [221]

I explain this passage somewhat different from other interpreters; for there seems to be implied a kind of irony, as we commonly say, Il faut bruler tous les livres. Hence Jeremiah derides their folly, in saying that they knew how they were to live, because the teaching of the law prevailed among them. ``If it be so, ``he says, ``what is God's law? Doubtless, nothing, as the whole of its teaching must in this way be deemed as nothing.'' We now then see that the Jews are here reproved as false, for they claimed the law, as though it were a shadow without a body, and possessed not a particle of right knowledge. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 8:9

9. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?

[221] The latter part of this verse has another meaning according to the ancient versions. They are substantially to this purport, — Behold, surely to deceive is what the false pen of the scribes has done. The Vulgate, with which the rest materially agree, is as follows, — Verily, falsehood has the false pen of the scribes wrought. As a proof of this it is added in the next verse, that those who pretended to be wise were made ashamed, etc. That the reference is made to the false glosses of the scribes, the expounders of the law, is confirmed by verse 11. I render the whole verse thus, — 8. How can ye say, “Wise are we, And the law of Jehovah is with us?” Indeed! — Behold, to deceive Has the deceptive pen of the scribes served. He ironically admits that they had the law; but he refers to the false interpretation of the teachers; and in the next verse he mentions the effect on the pretended wise, and the fact as to God’s law, — 9. Ashamed have become the wise, They have been dismayed and ensnared: Behold, the word of Jehovah have they despised; And wisdom, what have they! — Ed.

9. Pudefacti sunt sapientes, territi sunt et capti sunt {תחת}) significat proprie frangere, vel, conterere, sed transferter ad animum, et tunc significat terrere; dicit igitur esse territos, deinde illaqueatos; postea adjungit causam, nempe,) quia respuerunt in verbo (sed {ב} est supervacuum, verbum ergo) Jehova (reprobarunt, vel repudiarunt,) et sapientia quid illis (prodest, subaudiunt quidam interpretes; alii vertunt, et quid est in ipsis sapientiae? Ego autem aliter accipio, ut statim dicam.)

He says now that the wise were ashamed, and astonished, and ensnared By which words he means, that the Jews gained nothing by their craftiness, while they arrogated to themselves wisdom, and under this pretense rejected all admonitions, and sought to be spared.

``This wisdom, ``he says, ``avails you nothing, for God, as it is said in another place, will take you unawares.'' (Isaiah 29:14; 1 Corinthians 1:19.)

Ashamed, then, he says, are they; not that they were then ashamed; for be said before, in Jeremiah 6:15, and will state the same presently, that they were so hardened that they could not be made ashamed, nor be made to blush: [222] but he here denounces a punishment, which was soon to overtake them; as though he had said, ``Ye have now an iron front, and think that ye can elude God and his servants with impunity; but God will take you unawares, and will so shake off the masks under which you hide yourselves, that your disgrace shall be made manifest to all.'' This is the meaning.

For the same purpose he says, ``Ye are now secure, but God will shortly fill you with such terror, that he will make you greatly astonished'' He intimates, then, that nothing would benefit them while they took delight in their vices, and increasingly hardened themselves; for God would deprive them of their craftiness, and cast them down with terror, however secure and perverse they were now.

By the third word he sets forth the manner in which they would be treated: God would have his snares by which he would take them. He alludes to the subterfuges in which those hypocrites trust, who proudly oppose God, while they think that by their arts they can escape in this or that way, and often devise some new schemes by which they may deceive God. Hence the Prophet, alluding to their perverse cunning, says, that God would be as it were a fowler, who would ensnare them, and hold them captive.

He afterwards assigns the reason, Because they had repudiated, or despised or rejected, [223] (for the verb means all these things,) the word of Jehovah And he uses a demonstrative particle, Behold, that they might not, as usual, make any evasions: ``The thing, ``he says, ``is sufficiently known, and even children can be judges of your impiety, that you have rejected the word of Jehovah.'' He draws hence this inference, What does wisdom avail them? or, What is their wisdom? Either of these meanings may be admitted, They were wise to no purpose, while they provoked God by their impious contempt. ``I hate the wise who is not wise for himself, ``is an old proverb. As then the Jews ill consulted their own benefit, by rejecting the

[222] It would be better to consider the shame in this verse as referring to the people, and the want of shame in Jeremiah 8:12, as applied to the teachers, the scribes, the false interpreters of the law, who promised peace, while there was no peace. — Ed.

[223] The verb is here followed by {:{ב see note on Jeremiah 2:37

word of God, in which their safety was involved, the Prophet justly alleges, that their wisdom availed them nothing. Others read, ``What is their wisdom, ``when there is no fear of God? And doubtless it ever remains a truth, that the fear of God is the beginning and the chief part of wisdom. (Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 9:10; Psalm 111:10.) Since then they had basely despised God's word, rightly does the Prophet ask, ``What is their wisdom?'' But there is a third meaning which is suitable, even this, And wisdom, what to them? So it is literally, --- What is wisdom to them? He still speaks to them ironically, as though he said, ``They are indeed wise, but in their own esteem; they have therefore no need of being taught: What then is wisdom to them!'' The meaning is, that they were so swollen with pride that they received no instruction. How so? They refused wisdom through the false conceit with which they were inflated. Let, however, every one choose for himself; my object is to shew what I mostly approve. There will be no lecture to --- morrow, as a consistory is to be held.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou ceasest not daily to rouse us, as also our sloth requires continual warnings, --- O grant, that we may not be unteachable, and that our perverseness may not hinder us to return immediately and willingly to thee, from whom we have, through our own fault, alienated ourselves: and may we not only feel some desire to repent, but persevere so constantly in the exercise of penitence, that through the whole course of our life we may contend with our lusts, until having at length subdued them all, we shall reach the goal which has been set before us, and enjoy in heaven that eternal inheritance, which has been procured for us by the blood of thine only --- begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirty-Third

Jeremiah 8:10

10. Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

10. Propterea dabo uxores eorum alienis, et agros eorum possessoribus; quia a parvo usque ad magnum omnes cupiditatem concupiverunt (vel, cupiditate concupiverunt;) a propheta usque ad sacerdotem omnes egerunt fallaciter.

GOD here threatens punishment, because he found that he effected nothing, and that he had to do with an obstinate people, having before tried whether they were reclaimable. Having seen that exhortations were of no avail, he now comes to extreme severity, I will give, he says, their wives to strangers. He sets forth, by a particular instance, the evils which usually accompany wars: and nothing is more distressing than when the wife is snatched away from her husband; for if husbands had their option, they would prefer instant death than to bear such a disgrace. Jeremiah then shews that the most atrocious thing that happens to conquered nations was nigh the Jews, --- that their men would be deprived of their wives. He afterwards says the same thing of their fields; God declares that he would give the fields to their possessors. By this mode of speaking he intimates, that they would be deprived of their fields, not for a short time, but perpetually.

There is, indeed, a contrast here implied: for it sometimes happens, that enemies

prevail and plunder everything; but yet they take no long possession of the fields, for a change succeeds: but when he calls enemies possessors, he means that there would be such a calamity, that the Jews would for a long time, even for their life, be banished from their country, and would lose their possessions. They thought that the land was so given to them, that it could never be taken from them: and doubtless the Lord would have never expelled them, had they not defiled it with their pollutions; but as they had polluted it by their sins, they deserved to be banished from it. So the Prophet shews that their confidence was absurd, in thinking that they would be the perpetual inheritors of that land: ``Succeed you, ``he says, ``shall others, who shall possess it as it were by an hereditary right.'' We now perceive the Prophet's meaning.

He afterwards mentions the reason why God had resolved to deal so severely with them, For they are, he says, from the least to the greatest given up to avarice [224] He means that no equity prevailed among the people; for under one kind of sin he includes all frauds and plunders, and every kind of injustice. He then says, that every one was addicted to his own gain, so that they practiced mutual wrongs without any regard to what was right and just.

He then enlarges on the subject and says, that all, from the prophet to the priest, acted deceitfully There is here also a part mentioned for the whole. But Jeremiah in various ways sets forth the wrongs by which men harassed one another. Nor does he exclude violence when he speaks of fraud; but it is the same as though he said, that they, being forgetful of what was right, practiced fraud of every kind. It was, indeed, a dreadful thing, that there remained no rectitude or justice in the prophets and the priests, who ought to have carried light for others, and to have shewn to them the right way, as God had constituted them to be the leaders of the people. Since, then, even these acted deceitfully, there must have been among the common people the most disgraceful injustice. Hence the Prophet shews by these words, that God could not be charged with too much rigor, as though he treated the people cruelly; for there was such a mass of wickedness, that it could no longer be borne. It follows ---

Jeremiah 8:11

11. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

11. Et curarunt vulnus filiae populi mei super nihilo, dicendo, Pax, pax; et nulla pax.

THE Prophet repeats what we have noticed in the sixth chapter: but it was necessary to reiterate often, to the deaf and the slothful, what had already been forgotten, or what had not touched their hearts. As these things have been already explained, I shall now only refer briefly to the main points.

He no doubt condemns here the priests and the prophets. He spoke before generally of the whole people, ``from the least,'' he said, ``to the greatest.'' But as for the sake of amplifying, he had expressly mentioned the prophets and the priests as

[224] It would be more suitable to render "for" because, as it is explanatory of {,{כּי ``for this,`` or, for this reason, at the beginning of the verse. This illative, and others too, are often used anticipatively, --- For this reason, give will I Their wives to strangers, their fields to inheritors; Because from the least even to the greatest, Ever one covets gain; From the prophet even to the priest, Every one practices deception. --- Ed.

given to fraudulent dealings, he now in an especial manner condemns them, not only for grievously offending God, but also for deceiving others by their flatteries, as though they were allowed to sin with impunity. It is, indeed, an inexcusable crime in those, who ought to lead others, to be no less wicked than the common people; for they not only by their example, but also by their doctrine, corrupt the whole community, and thus they increase the evil twofold. It was therefore an intolerable impiety, when they were so presumptuous as to spread those falsehoods, by which they led the people to despise God and his law. Hence he says, that they healed the wound of the people, while God was yet shewing tokens of his wrath. And he speaks, as it has been said elsewhere, by way of concession, as though he had said, that they were very foolish physicians in applying plaisters to cover the wrath of God. [225]

Behold, he says, they have healed the wound of my people, saying, Peace, peace By mentioning the word twice the Prophet shews more clearly how supine was their security; for they deceived the people not only once, but proceeded obstinately in the work of deceiving the wretched people by their false promises. He adds, When there was no peace This may be taken in two ways, --- that God by the event exposed their madness, --- or, that when there was no prosperity, they still fallaciously promised peace. As God elsewhere complains that the prophets flattered the people, so he does here: such sentences we have already often explained. He then adds ---

Jeremiah 8:12

12. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the Lord.

12. An pudor (est enim interrogative hoc legendum, sicuti capite sexto diximus, subaudienda igitur est particula, An; An ergo pudefacti sunt) quod abominationem patrarunt? etiam in pudore non pudifacti sunt, et erubescere non noverunt; propterea cadent inter cadentes; in tempore visitationis ipsorum impingent (vel, corruent,) dicit Jehova.

The Prophet in these words shews still more clearly that they were wholly irreclaimable; for they had divested themselves of every shame. It is no doubt a proof of a wickedness past all remedy, when no shame remains. This verse has been also explained in the sixth chapter; it forms the fifteenth verse. But we must bear in mind the design of the Prophet. It is then briefly this, --- to shew that the wickedness of the people was unhealable, and for this reason, because they had an iron front.

Hence he asks, Have they been ashamed, because they have committed abomination? as though he had said, ``They have been proved guilty of wickedness, can they be made to feel any shame?'' To this he answers, Even in their shame they are not ashamed The particle {גם}, gam, even, is emphatic, Then the meaning may be thus given, --- that when God brought against them their shameful conduct, and proved them guilty, so that they could not escape by any evasion --- that when they were thus convicted, they yet had no feeling of shame. At the same time, this passage may be explained as referring to what is commonly called actual conviction; for they were well --- nigh consumed with miseries, through their untamable perverse-

[225] See note on Jeremiah 6:14.

ness, while contending with God's judgment. Even then in shame itself they had no feeling of shame

Added is the reason, They know not how to blush By this want of shame, then, Jeremiah proves that they were men past remedy. And on this account he adds, Fall therefore shall they among those who fall, and in the time of their visitation they shall perish, or stumble. By these words he intimates that they were no longer to be reasoned with, and that God's vengeance would be just in wholly destroying them, for he had in vain spoken to them, he had in vain contended with them, he had in vain tried to bring them to the right way. The import of the whole then is, --- that the only thing that remained for them was destruction; for they had without shame rejected all instruction and every warning.

And he says, among the fallen, because every one, as it is commonly the case, encouraged others in their contempt of God, and in their perverseness. When therefore they saw others to be like themselves, they entertained hope of impunity; and hence they were allured to sin by this deception. On this account the Prophet says, that ruin was nigh them all. They shall fall, he says, among the fallen, [226] and stumble in the time of their visitation. He shews that God had fixed a day in which they were to be destroyed. But if he deferred the time, there was no reason for them to think that it would be to their advantage; for they would by their obstinacy procure for themselves a heavier judgment. In short, though God might spare them for a time, yet the Prophet warns them, that this would avail them nothing, as God's time of visitation was fixed. Then follows a confirmation ---

Jeremiah 8:13

13. I will surely consume them, saith the Lord: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them.

13. Colligendo colligam (vel, perdendo perdam,) dicit Jehova: non uvae in vite (vel, botri,) et non ficus in ficulnea; et folium decidet, et dabo illis, transibunt (hoc est, quae dedere illis transibunt ab ipsis.)

He confirms, as I have said, what he had declared in the last verse, tie had said, that there would be the ruin of the whole people: for the same purpose he now adds, Destroying I will destroy them The verb {אסף}, asaph, properly means ``to collect, ``but metaphorically, ``to destroy;'' as we say in our language, Trousser; Je les trousserai tous ensemble. And hence it more fully appears, that the Prophet explains what he had said, that destruction was nigh them all, so that none would remain, that is, with regard to the people as a body, as a community; for God ever preserved a remnant. We have, indeed, said elsewhere, and we shall have to no-

[226] This may be differently understood. There are here throughout the passage two parties spoken of, — the people, and the priests together with the prophets. The “wise” men, in Jeremiah 8:9, made ashamed were the people deluded by the priests and prophets. Those who felt no shame, mentioned in this verse, though their words proved false, were the priests and prophets: and hence we see the import of this expression here, that they were appointed to fall with the fallen, that punishment would reach them as well as the people. This verse is somewhat different from the fifteenth of the sixth chapter, and may be thus rendered, — 12. Have they been ashamed, Because they have done abomination? Even with shame they are not ashamed, And how to blush they know not: Therefore fall shall they with the fallen; At the time of their visitation They shall perish, saith Jehovah. The “abomination” was the perversion of the law so as to justify idolatry and all kinds of wickedness. — Ed.

tice the same thing often again, that the prophets, regarding the people as a body, threatened them all with destruction; but when they addressed the elect, and the faithful, they added a modification: Destroying I will then destroy them

He afterwards shews the manner: No grapes shall be on the vines, and no figs on the fig --- trees The word for ``fig'' means the fruit as well as the tree, as it is well known. And that he might more fully set forth God's vengeance, he says, that the very leaves would wither. The meaning is, that God would soon come as an avenger, however securely the Jews might be resting in their sins: and he shews the kind of vengeance that awaited them, --- that God would deprive them of all sustenance and support; by mentioning a part for the whole, he includes everything necessary for life. He speaks not of wine, and of corn, and of oil; but by figs and grapes, as I have said, he comprehends every kind of sustenance; and even the leaves would wither and fall.

In the second place, he adds, Even, what I shall give them shall pass away from them Some apply this to the fruit in the granaries and cellars, as though he had said, ``Even if they should have provisions in their storehouses and cellars, and be furnished with plenty, all this shall yet avail them nothing, for it shall be all taken away; for to pass away has often this meaning; and the {מ}, mem, affixed, is the same as though it was {מהם}, meem, from them. Others render the words, ``they shall pass over them;'' but this is too strained. They refer to the precepts granted to the Jews, which they had rendered void or neglected: but this cannot suit the passage. And as to the first explanation, it seems to me too limited. I therefore take this to be the meaning, --- ``Even if the grapes and figs come to maturity, yet what they shall consider as already prepared shall be taken away.'' The Prophet then means, that there would be various ways by which the Jews would be reduced to penury and want; for either the enemies would rob them of their grapes and figs, or he himself would send sterility; or, when they thought their provisions secured to them, they would not yet be allowed to enjoy them. This is the import of the whole. [227] It follows ---

Jeremiah 8:14

14. Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced cities, and let us be silent there: for the Lord our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the Lord.

14. Ut quid nos sedemus? congregate vos, et ingrediamur urbes munitas (urbes munitionis, ad verbum,) et quiescamus illic: certe Jehova Deus noster silere nos (vel, quiescere nos) fecit, et potavit nos a quis venenatis (vel, aquis fellis; nam {ראש}, significat fel et venenum;) quia impie egimus contra Jehovam.

This verse, and those which follow, are explained in different ways; but I will briefly shew the meaning of the Prophet. I have no doubt but that he speaks here in

[227] The verse may be thus rendered, — 13. I will gather their ingathering, saith Jehovah: No grapes shall be on the vine, And no figs on the fig-tree, Even the leaf shalt fade away; For I will give these to those who shall pass through them. God threatens the Jews with the deprivation of the fruits of the earth. He would gather their fruits by means of their enemies, such as would pass through them; and there would be no limits for them. As to the last line, it is a common thing in Hebrew to leave out the relative “who” before a verb in the future tense. So it is in Welsh — Canys rhoddav y rhain iddynt hwy a dramwyant trwyddynt. The most literal and the most suitable to the context is this rendering. — Ed.

the name of the whole people. The Prophet, then, in these words, represents what occupied their minds, and the counsels which the Jews adopted: and further, there is no doubt but that he shews in these words that they, as hypocrites are wont to do, had recourse to expedients, by which they thought they could protect themselves from God's wrath. For they who think that the Prophet spoke his own sentiments are greatly mistaken: on the contrary, he relates here the purposes which the Jews formed; and at the same time he reproves their hardness in turning here and there, and in thinking that they could turn aside the judgment of God; for hypocrites, unless constrained, never ascend to the first cause; that is, they never acknowledge nor regard the hand of him who strikes them, as it is said in another place. (Isaiah 9:13.) They indeed feel their evils, and seek to apply remedies; but they stop at the nearest reliefs, without seeking to pacify God and to return into favor with him; and when the smallest hope is given them, they think themselves to be safe, if they betake themselves to this or that hiding-place.

This feeling is what the Prophet describes: Why do we sit? or, ``Why do we rest?'' But the word here means to sit still: Why do we then sit still? as though they had accused themselves of sloth or idleness: ``What means this our slothfulness? we sit still in the villages, which are exposed to the violence of enemies: gather then yourselves, and let us enter into fortified cities; we shall rest there.'' They thought that they should be safe, if they entered into fortified cities. Then, on the other hand, Jeremiah shews how foolishly they trusted to such refuges. Surely, he says, our God hath made us silent He had said before {שם}-{ונדמה}, vanudame-shem, ``and we shall there rest.'' The verb,* means to rest, and to be silent. He repeats the same word, ``Surely, our God hath made us to be silent;'' but in a different sense. There is then a striking allusion in the verb {דמה}, dame*, or the sameness of sound. ``Jehovah hath made us to be silent, ``or to rest; or, he hath cut us off, for in Hiphil, it has this meaning. [228]

We hence see, that on the one hand is declared what might have given some comfort to the Jews, for there were fortified cities which might have protected them from the assaults of enemies; but, on the other hand, the Prophet shews that they were greatly mistaken, for God would make them to rest in a different manner, as he would reduce them to nothing; for the dead are said to rest, or to be silent. In short, he means a quiet state when speaking in the name of the people; but he refers to destruction when speaking by God's command.

He afterwards confirms the same thing in a metaphorical language, God will give them the waters of gall, or, poisoned waters: and he adds, Because they have acted impiously against Jehovah We may learn from this last part, that the Prophet is now

[228] The verb {,means{דמה to be silent, to be reduced to silence; and the silence is that of inactivity, or of weakness, or of death. The silence of inactivity seems to be the meaning in the first instance, and the silence of weakness in the second: ``Let us be silent,`` or, let us rest; ``God hath made us silent,`` or, made us feeble, or, reduced to nothing our strength: --- 14. Why do we sit still? be ye assembled, And let us go into fortified cities, And let us be silent there; For Jehovah our God has reduced us to silence; And he has given us to drink the water of hemlock, Because we have sinned against Jehovah. That is{ראש} ``hemlock,`` or some poisonous herb, is evident from Hosea 10:4. ``The water'' seems to be the juice in this instance --- ``the juice of hemlock.'' It is rendered ``the water of gall, {ὕδωρ} {χολῶς},'' by the Septuagint, and the same by the Vulgate; ``bitter waters,`` by the Syriac; ``water of bitterness,`` by the Arabic; ``the cup of malediction,`` by the Targum. ``Water of hemlock'' is the rendering of Blayney. Horsley renders the third and the fourth line as follows: --- And let us there sit in despair, Since the Lord our God hath brought us to despair. --- Ed.

performing the duty of his office. The people indeed never willingly allowed that they were suffering punishment justly due to their sins; but the Prophet here reproves them for hoping to be safe by fleeing to fortified cities, as though God could not follow them there. He then says that God's vengeance would closely pursue them, and that wherever they fled, they would still be exposed to evils, for they carried with them their impieties, which would draw upon them the wrath of God. It follows ---

Jeremiah 8:15

15. We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble!

15. Expectando [229] pacem (vel, ad pacem) et non bonum; ad tempus sanationis, et ecce terror (aut, turbatio.)

He explains his meaning more clearly in this verse, --- that the Jews in vain flattered themselves, while they entertained vain hopes. He then says that there was no reason for them to deceive themselves; for were they to promise themselves peace a hundred times, ruin would still be nigh them, and that though they hoped for a time of healing, terror would assail them. We hence see that in the last verse his purpose was to shew how foolish the people were, who thought that they would be safe by means of the remedies which seemed to be at hand, though they despised God's judgment. It follows ---

Jeremiah 8:16

16. The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein.

16. A Dan auditus est fremitus equorum ejus, a voce hinnituum robustorum ejus tremefacta est (vel, contremuit) tota terra; quia venient (nam copula hic resolvi debet in causalem particulam) et comedent terram et plenitudinem (vel, copiam) ejus, urbem et habitatores ejus.

He says, Heard has been the snorting of horses from Daniel Dan was on the extremities, as it is well known, of the land of Canaan. Some think that the loudness of the noise is intended, as it was heard from such a distance in the holy city itself; but I know not whether this can be gathered from the words of the Prophet. The simpler and the correcter meaning then is, that though Jerusalem rested securely, they were not yet in a quiet state on the borders of the land, for they were disturbed by the snorting of the enemies' horses. From Dan then has been heard a snorting When the inhabitants of a city indulge in pleasures, while the borders of the land are assailed by enemies, it might be pertinently said to them, ``Why do ye here live at your ease? your neighbors and your brethren are exposed to the assaults of enemies: war therefore ought to be waged in your land, though it has not yet reached your gates and your walls.'' So the Prophet speaks here: ``From Dan has been heard the snorting of his horses.'' The relative ``his'' may be applied to the Assyrians; for the Hebrews often use relatives without antecedents. But it is more probable that

[229] The word is {,{קוה hoping, or longing, rendered by all the ancient versions, as though it were in the first person plural. It may be taken as a noun, --- The hope was for peace, but there was no good! For a time of healing, but behold terror! --- Ed.

Jeremiah refers to the first mover of the war, even God; as though he had said, --- ``God will send forth hostile armies, which will disturb the borders of your land.'' He then calls them the horses of God; for the Chaldeans did not wage that war, but under the authority of God, as we have often seen, and shall have to notice often again.

Then he says, At the noise of the neighings of his strong ones, etc. He calls the horses ``strong,`` {אבירים}, abirim; and as he had not described them, he now does so. Trembled, he says, has the land at the noise of the neighings of his strong ones As he mentions the neighings of horses, we must understand ``strong'' as referring to the horses themselves. Come, he says, shall they, and shall devour the land and its fullness, the city and its inhabitants Here is an irregularity as to the number; for he puts city for cities, as he threatens not only Jerusalem, but also the neighboring cities. Whatever then might be the abundance in the land, the enemies would devour it; and he says also, that they would devour the cities and their inhabitants. It follows ---

Jeremiah 8:17

17. For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the Lord

17. Quia ecce ego mitto in vos serpentes, regulos (quidam tamen subaudiunt copulam, serpentes et regulos) quibus nulla erit incantatio, et mordebunt vos, dicit Jehova.

He increases their terror by another comparison, --- that not only enemies would violently attack them, but that their bitings would be venomous. He had spoken of horses, and mentioned their violent onsets; but he now expresses another thing, --- that the Jews would have to carry on war with vipers and basilisks The Prophet no doubt only meant to shew that they could not possibly escape; for as from serpents men can hardly escape, especially when they are numerous, and assail them on every side, so he intimates, that the war would be fatal to the Jews, when attacked by serpents and vipers.

They shall bite you, he says, and for them there will be no incantation; that is, by no means can they be driven away from you. If one asks, Can serpents be driven away by incantations? the answer is, --- that the Prophet here does not refer to what is true, but speaks according to the common opinions of men. It has been thought in all ages, that serpents can be driven away by incantations, or be killed, or be deprived of the power of hurting. ``The deadly snake, ``says Virgil, in Eclo. viii., ``is dissolved in the meadows by singing.'' What that heathen poet has said has been believed also by other nations; and as I have already said, it has been a commonly received opinion that serpents may be charmed. As then it was a common belief, the Prophet says, ``If ye think that these serpents can be turned away, and the hurt that proceeds from them, ye are greatly deceived; for there will be for them no incantation.'' There is also a mention made of incantation in Psalm 58:6: but as I have already said, the prophets accommodate their words to the comprehension of men. The Prophet does here also indirectly reprove the Jews, by comparing their false resources to incantations, as though he had said, --- ``Ye think that ye can

soothe your enemies by flatteries and bribery, so that they may not hurt you; and ye also think that ye have ready at hand various means by which you may avert the evils which impend over you: in vain, he says, ye deceive yourselves with such hopes; for all your incantations as to these serpents shall be to no purpose, and wholly useless.''

We now then perceive the Prophet's intention, and see that by this figure he ironically derides the crafty measures of the people, and all the remedies which they thought they had in readiness when assailed by their enemies. It follows ---

Jeremiah 8:18

18 When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me.

18. Roborate meum (vel, quum vellem roborare me) super dolorem, super me cor meum infirmum est.

Interpreters explain differently the word {מבלגיתי}, mebelgiti. Some take {מ}, mem, in the sense of {ב}, beth; but others, with whom I agree, regard it as a servile, deriving the word from {בלג}, belag; and this letter is prefixed to it to shew that it is a noun. The {ת}, tau, also at the end, is a servile. [230]

The Prophet then means, that he sought strength in his sorrow, but that his heart was weak He no doubt, I think, sets forth in this verse the perverse character of the people, --- that they sought through their obstinacy to drive away every punishment. This could not indeed be referred to himself, or to those who were like him, as we know how fearful are God's servants with regard to his wrath; for as the fear of God prevails in their hearts, so they are easily terrified by his judgment; but hypocrites and wicked men ever harden themselves as far as they can. They then strengthened themselves against God, and thought in this way to be conquerors. Since they thus perversely contended with God, the Prophet sets forth here the great hardness of the people: I would, he says, strengthen myself in my sorrow; but my heart is within me weak; that is, ``In vain are these remedies tried; in vain have ye hitherto endeavored to strengthen yourselves, and have sought fortresses and strongholds against God; for sorrow will at length prevail, as the Lord will add troubles to troubles, so that ye must at length succumb under them.''

He means the same when he says, his heart was within him weak: ``I have, ``he says, ``been oppressed with sorrow, when I thought I had strength enough to resist.'' For thus the ungodly think manfully to act, when they madly resist God; but at length they find by the event that they in vain seek thus to strengthen themselves; for our heart, he says, will become within us weak, and debility itself will at last oppress and

[230] The ancient versions and the Targum all differ as to the meaning of this word; and it is difficult to make the original to agree with any of them. The word, as in the received text, is a verbal noun from Hiphil, with a iod affixed to it, and is either a personal noun in the feminine gender, “my consoler,“ or “strengthener,“ meaning his own soul,-or a common noun, “my consolation,“ or “strength,“ meaning God. But Schultens, regarding the verb as signifying to smile or to laugh, and thinking that it means here the laugh of misery or of contempt, renders it “O thou (i.e., the daughter of Sion) that grinnest at me for pain,“ and sayest, “within me the heart is sick.” The Targum seems to favor this view, as it mentions the division of the people. Blayney, according to several copies, divides the word thus, {מבלי, {גיתי} and considers the one as a negative, and the other a verbal noun from ,{גהה} to heal, and renders the verse thus: --- Sorrow is upon me past my remedying, My heart within me is faint. Still the simplest way, and the most suitable to the passage, is to take the word as a common noun, signifying consolation, comfort or strength, and to consider the words as addressed to God, --- My strength! within me is sorrow, Within me is my heart faint. ``Faint,`` that is, through grief. It is rendered ``grieve,`` or ``is sorrowful,`` by all the ancient versions and the Targum. --- Ed.

overwhelm us.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since we have been abundantly taught by ancient examples how insane they are who bend not under thy threatenings, and repent not in due time while thou invitest them to repentance, --- O grant, that we may wholly give up ourselves to be disciplined by thee, and that we may not only bear with submissive minds to be chastised, but also learn by thy warnings to return without delay to thee, and that we may so remain in obedience to thee, that with unceasing perseverance we may fight under thy banner, until having at length finished our warfare, we shall enjoy that blessed rest which has been prepared for us by Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirty-Fourth

Jeremiah 8:19

19. Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the LORD in Zion? is not her king in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?

19. Ecce vox clamoris filiae populi mei a terra longinqua, An Jehova non est in Sion? an rex ejus non est in ea? Quare provocarunt me ad iram in suis sculptilibus? in vanitati-bus aiieni?

The Prophet in this verse assumes different characters: he first denounces ruin, which, though near, was not yet dreaded by the people; he then represents the people, and relates what they would say; in the third place, he adds an answer in God's name to check the clamors of the people.

When he says that the daughter of his people uttered a cry, he is to be understood as referring to a future time; for the Jews as yet continued perversely in their sins, and ridiculed all threatenings, and regarded as nothing what was said by the prophets. Jeremiah then does not mean that his own nation cried, as though they dreaded future calamities, (for they were heedlessly secure;) but he condemns their indifference, as though he had said, ``Ye indeed do now indulge your own delusions, and think that your felicity is to be perpetual; but in a short time your cry will be heard.'' The words, From a distant land, interpreters apply to the Chaldeans and Assyrians, as though the Prophet had said, ``Ye hope for a perpetual rest, because your enemies are far from you; hence distance and delay in marching produce this security in you; for it seems not to you credible that your enemies shall make such a journey, except with much expense and much trouble; but in this opinion you are deceived; for though the Chaldeans and the Assyrians are far distant from you, yet they shall soon come and constrain you to utter a cry: ye cannot now bear the warnings of the prophets, my voice ye cannot endure; but God will constrain you to utter a different voice, for ye shall cry, but without any avail.''

This meaning is not without reason on its side: if then the Prophet's words be thus taken, I offer no objection; for hypocrites derive confidence from the present appearance of things; when they see that there is quietness on every side, they fear no danger; when God threatens them, and shews not immediately his rods, they ridicule or despise them.: thus have we seen in other places.

But another meaning is not unsuitable, --- that Jeremiah describes the lamentations of the people in exile, after having been driven into Chaldea and Assyria: The voice, then, of the daughter of my people from a distant land; [231] that is, after having been deprived of their country, they will then begin to cry, and for this reason, because they wished the prophets to give them rest, and refused to bear any reproofs. Appropriate also is this view; but I prefer the former, --- that the people would shortly find out how foolishly they deluded themselves, when God by his servants threatened them with ruin and destruction: and hence he uses the demonstrative particle, ``Behold:'' Behold, he says, the voice of crying; and yet great was the silence then at Jerusalem: for though in their pleasure they uttered some voices, yet as to weepings and lamentations the whole city was silent. The Prophet then refers to what was hidden. But God usually acts in this way, as he afterwards executes suddenly his judgment; for when the wicked say, Peace, peace, destruction comes and suddenly overwhelms them. (1 Thessalonians 5:8.)

He adds in the second place, Is not Jehovah in Sion? Is not her king in her? The Prophet no doubt expresses here the complaints of the people on finding themselves overwhelmed with so many and so great evils, without receiving any aid from heaven. For hypocrites ever expostulate with God; and as they consider that they are unjustly chastised, they reject every instruction, and avoid it as much as they can; in short, they seek stupidity, that they may deceive themselves with vain delusions. As then it is usual with hypocrites to reject every apprehension of God's wrath, Jeremiah strikingly describes their contumacy, ``Is not Jehovah in Sion? Is not her king in her?'' For they accused God of falsehood, as though he had deceived them, since he had promised to be the defender of the city, and of the whole land. As then they thought that God was bound to them by this promise, they daringly raged against him, ``What means this? for God has chosen this place, where Abraham's race might worship him; it has been as it were his earthly kingdom: but now what can this mean, that enemies are coming here? Can God ever permit them to do so? This is not possible, except God himself be overcome.''

We hence see the import of the Prophet's words; for he here imitates the perverse language of the people, and recites the words which he knew most of them used. We have before found him addressing them,

``Trust not in words of falsehood, saying, The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah,''
(Jeremiah 7:4;)

for they were wont perversely to allege against God, the temple, and to regard it as a shield to ward off every evil. In the same way the Prophet says now, ``Is not God in Sion?'' and then, ``Is not her king in her?'' The Jews were not only persuaded that God would be propitious to them, but they doubted not of their own safety, while they could turn their eyes to their king. They therefore uttered these words, as though they were beyond the chance of danger: for we know what God had declared respecting the kingdom, that it would continue for ever: So long as the

[231] Literally it is, "The voice of the shout of the daughter of my people," four words in succession, and three in regimine by juxtaposition. The Welsh is exactly the same, "Llev gwaedd merch vy mhobl" — Voice shout daughter my people. — Ed.

sun and moon shall be in heaven, shall remain the seat of David, and his posterity flourish. (Psalm 89:36, 37.) Hence they connected the king with God; as though they had said, ``Here is God worshipped, and his power dwells in the temple; the king also, whom he has set over us, is a sure pledge of his favor; and the perpetuity of his kingdom has been promised to us: it then follows, that either God is untrue, and that we have been deceived with vain promises, or that our enemies will come in vain; for when they shall make every effort, God, who is the guardian of our safety, will easily drive them away.''

At the first view this seems to be an evidence of faith, as the people seemed persuaded that they should be safe and secure under the protection of God, and as they turned their eyes to that kingdom, which was a remarkable exhibition of God's presence: for as David was a type of Christ, and also his posterity, no other refuge could have been sought by the faithful than that which is here described. But we know how hypocrites swell with vain confidence, while yet they are wholly destitute of faith, and how they become wantonly insolent whenever God threatens them, as though they held him bound at their will. As then the ungodly are wont thus to abuse the name of God, it is no wonder that they imitate the language of his true servants: but yet they are wholly different. How so? They lay hold on the promises, but they have no faith nor repentance. ``This is my rest for ever: it then follows that we shall be ever safe, for God cannot be overcome by any force of arms, by any onset of enemies; since he has taken us under his protection, what have we to fear?'' But, at the same time, they despised God and all his teaching.

We hence see how foolish was the boasting of that people, since they wholly despised the holy name of God, and did swell only with wind, inasmuch as they were altogether destitute of faith and piety. We must also ever keep in mind what I have already said, --- that the Jews not only entertained this vain confidence, but also presumptuously rose up against God, as though he had deceived them, having promised that Sion would be his perpetual rest: they now ask him, why he did not defend the city, as he dwelt in Sion? and why was not the king their protection, since it had been said, ``So long as the sun and moon shall be in heaven, shall remain the throne of David?'' Now follows God's answer.

Why then have they provoked me with their carvings, and the vanities of the foreigner? Here God retorts their false complaints. We hence learn, that in the last clause the contumacy of the people is what is set forth by Jeremiah: they raged against God, because he did not aid them in time. God shews how absurdly they complained against him, and accused him: Why, he says, have they provoked me? ``They say now that they are forsaken, because there is no faithfulness in me: I have not betrayed them, nor forsaken them, but they have forsaken me'' We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet. We observe, indeed, that the passage is abrupt, for the Prophet assumes different characters; but as to what is meant there is nothing doubtful.

God says, that he was provoked with carvings: it hence follows, that the temple was polluted. God had indeed promised to dwell in the temple, but on a certain condition, provided he was faithfully, and in a legitimate manner, worshipped there;

but the people with their pollutions had defiled the temple. God then shews that there was a just cause why he had departed, according to what is set forth more fully in the tenth chapter of Ezekiel: God shews to his servant in that vision that he had left the temple, and for this reason, --- because his holiness could not be blended with ungodly and filthy profanations. He first mentions carvings generally, and then he adds, the vanities of the foreigner: and here he amplifies the sin of the people, because they borrowed here and there from foreigners such superstitions as were unknown to their fathers, as though they wished to banish God from the temple, and from the whole land. [232] It follows ---

Jeremiah 8:20

20. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

20. Transiit messis, finita est aestas, et nos non sumus servati.

The Prophet shews now in the name of the people what was the hindrance. At the time Jeremiah spoke, the Jews confidently boasted that God was their defender; and they did not think that the Chaldeans were preparing for an expedition. But as they were inflated with false confidence, the Prophet here recites what they would presently say, Passed has the harvest, ended has the summer, and we have not been saved; that is, ``We thought that the associates, with whom we have made alliances, would at length come to our aid; and we have in this respect been deceived.'' In saying, that the harvest had passed, some think that they expected help from the Egyptians after they had gathered their corn into barns; for there is then more leisure, and then also there are provisions for the army. But the Prophet seems to include the whole time suitable for carrying on war; as though he had said, ``What will become of us at last? for if the Egyptians intended to bring help, they would have done so at the suitable time of the year; but passed has the harvest, and the summer has ended: will they come now, when the severity of winter constrains them to keep at home?.''

It is the same as though they had said, ``There is no hope of aid either from the Egyptians or from other confederates, for the seasonable time is gone by.'' There was nothing less credible to the Jews at that time; for as it; has elsewhere appeared, they doubted not but that the Egyptians would bring them aid, and supply them with help instead of God: but the Prophet intimates, that whatever the Egyptians might have promised would be in vain, and wholly useless, that the people would at length find out by experience that their promises were mere trumperies, yea, impostures

[232] The meaning of this verse is viewed by some differently. Their exile is considered as referred to at the beginning of the verse, "from a distant land," — or literally, "from the land of the remote ones." All the versions render the preposition "from," and not "because of," as in our version. The Prophet contemplates them as in banishment, and relates what they would say, and what answer God had for them: and they seem to have been thus contemplated to the end of the chapter, — 19. Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people From the land of the remote ones, — "Was not Jehovah in Sion? Was not her king within her?" "Why! they provoked me with their carved images, With the vanities of the foreigner." Then follows the continuation of the cry in exile, — 20. "Passed has the harvest, Ended has the summer, And we have not been saved!" The "King," in verse 19, is "Jehovah" in the former line. "The vanities of the foreigner" were idols: they were vanities, because they could do nothing, neither good nor evil. What made them gods were the imaginations of the infatuated and superstitious. The gods of many now are nothing better. Every notion of God is false but what is consistent with his word. The Socinian god is not the true God; it is the fiction of a perverted mind. Nor is the god of the thorough Papists anything better, nor the god of the Pharisee. — Ed.

and deceits. In short, he describes in the name of the people (that what he said might be more emphatical) what they would soon find out, though they would not believe it at that time. It follows ---

Jeremiah 8:21

21. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.

21. Super contritione filiae populi mei contritus sum, obtenebratus sum, stupor (nam {שמם} est stupere et attonitum esse; stupor ergo) apprehendit me.

As the hardness of the people was so great, that the threatenings we have observed did not touch them, the Prophet now ascribes to himself what he had before attributed to them. We then see how the Prophet varies his mode of speaking; but it was necessary, for he was at a loss to find a way to address them sufficiently strong to penetrate into their stony and even iron hearts. We need not wonder, then, that there are so many figurative terms used by the Prophet; for it was needful to set before them God's judgment in various ways, that the people might be awakened out of their torpid state.

He then says, that he was bruised for the bruising of his people. He was no doubt ridiculed by most of them: ``Oh! thou grievest for thine own evils; it is well and prosperous with us: who has asked thee for this pity? Think not, then, that thou canst gain any favor with us, for we are contented with our lot. Weep rather for thine own calamities, if thou hast any at home; but suffer us at the same time to enjoy our pleasures, since God is propitious and indulgent to us.'' Thus then was the Prophet derided; but yet he warns the obstinate people, that they might be less excusable: he says, that he was rendered black; for sorrow brings blackness with it, and makes dark the face of man: it is a metaphorical expression. He says at last, that he was astonished [233] The astonishment with which he was seized he no doubt sets down as being the opposite of the people's torpor and insensibility, for they had no fear for themselves. It follows ---

Jeremiah 8:22

22 Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

22. An resina (aut, balsamus) non est in Gilead? an medicus non illic est? nam cur non ascendit sanitas filiae populi mei?

The Prophet intimates in these words that the slaughter of the people would be so fatal that they would in vain seek remedies; as though he had said, that the disease would be incurable, and altogether deadly. The people, no doubt, ever devised for themselves many kinds of aids, according to what is commonly done; for ungodly men, when any danger appears, look around them on all sides; and when they think that they can be protected by any kind of assistance, or by any of the means they contrive, they rest secure and free from every trouble. Hence the Prophet, that he

[233] To keep throughout the metaphorical character of this verse, it ought to be rendered thus, — For the bruising of the daughter of my people I was bruised, I became black; Desolation possessed me. But taking the words as applied to the mind, divested of metaphor, we must render them thus, — For the sorrow of the daughter of my people I sorrowed, I mourned; Astonishment possessed me. And this “astonishment” he explains in the next verse: there were means of restoration, and yet the people were not restored; at this he was astonished. — Ed.

might dispel such vain confidences, says that there would be no rosin to heal their diseases. The rosin is a liquid which flows, not from every tree, but from the pine, and trees of that kind.

We may conclude from this passage, as well as from other passages, that the best and the most valuable rosin was found in that part of Judea, called Gilead. Indeed the whole of Judea produced rosin; but as it was more abundant in Gilead, and as that rosin was more odoriferous and more powerful, he expressly mentions that place. The word {צרי} tsari, means also balsam: and as to this let each follow his own opinion, for the Jews themselves do not altogether agree. They who render it ``treacle'' wholly depart from the meaning, and offer what is absurd; for we know that treacle is made up of several ingredients: now rosin is not any sort of gum, but a thick liquid, as I have said, which belongs to trees; and from it comes rosin, and mastic, and other things; for the liquid becomes thick after it has flown from the trees.

He says then, as one astonished, Is there not rosin in Gilead? Is there not a physician there? But the Prophet foretells here by the Spirit, that there would be such a destruction as could not by any means be avoided, that the disease would be incurable. For why, he says, does not health come to the daughter of my people? The reason is added, because healing could not be expected by the people; not that the Jews perceived this, for, on the contrary, they boasted, as I have said, of their perfect safety. But the Prophet here declares that a deadly disease was at hand, which would inevitably destroy the wicked [234] Afterwards follows ---

[234] As the whole passage, from the 19th verse, is anticipative, and represents the ease of the Jews in captivity, this verse is to be viewed in the same light, and rendered in the past tense, — 22. Was there not balm in Gilead? Was there not a healer there? Why then has not succeeded The recovery of the daughter of my people? Whether balm or rosin be meant, it makes no great difference; its healing virtues had become proverbial; and in this sense it is to be taken here. Kimchi held that it was balm or balsam, which Josephus reports was first brought to Judea by the Queen of Sheba. But the tree which produced {,{צרי was not an exotic, but indigenous in Judea, as it appears from Genesis 37:25, and 43:10; and it grew especially in Gilead, as it appears from this passage and from chap. 46:11 Bochart maintained that rosin is meant by the word, the gum drawn from the Terebinthus or the turpentine tree, which possesses strong healing virtues. It is rendered, ``{ῥητίνη} --- rosin,'' by the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Arabic; and ``cera --- wax,'' by the Syriac. ``Healer,'' or physician, is rendered ``{ἰατρὸς} --- healer,'' by the Septuagint, and ``medicus,'' by the Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic. It appears that Gilead was not only celebrated for its healing gum, but also for its medical men. The balm was the word of God, and the healer who applied it was the prophet or the teacher. Perhaps the most literal rendering of the first two lines is the following, and the most suitable to express astonishment, --- The balm, not in Gilead!: Verily, a healer, not there! --- Ed.

Chapter 9

CHAPTER 9

Jeremiah 9:1

1. Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

1. Quis ponet caput meum aquas, et oculum meum fontem lachrymarum? et deflebo die et nocte (hoc est, dies et noctes) interfectos filiae populi mei.

He follows the same subject. During times of tranquillity, when nothing but joyful voices were heard among the Jews, he bewails, as one in the greatest grief, the miseries of the people; and being not satisfied with this, he says, Who will set, or make, my head waters, and my eye a fountain of tears? He intimates by these words, that the ruin would be so dreadful that it could not be bewailed by a moderate or usual lamentation, inasmuch as God's vengeance would exceed common bounds, and fill men with more dread than other calamities.

The meaning is, that the destruction of the people would be so monstrous that it could not be sufficiently bewailed. It hence appears how hardened the Jews had become; for doubtless the Prophet had no delight in such comparisons, as though he wished rhetorically to embellish his discourse; but as he saw that their hearts were inflexible, and that a common way of speaking would be despised, or would have no weight and authority, he was constrained to use such similitudes. And at this day, there is no less insensibility in those who despise God; for however Prophets may thunder, while God spares and indulges them, they promise to themselves perpetual quietness. Hence it is, that they ridicule and insult both God and his servants, as though they were too harshly treated. As then, the same impiety prevails now in the world as formerly, we may hence learn what vehemence they ought to use whom God calls to the same office of teaching. Plain teaching, then, will ever be deemed frigid in the world, except it, be accompanied with sharp goads, such as we find

employed here by the Prophet [235] He adds ---

Jeremiah 9:2

2. Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.

2. Quis statuet me in deserto, in diversorio (alii, tugurium, vertunt; sed nescio an reperiatur {מלון} in hoc sensu) viatorum? et relinquam populum meum et discedam ab illis; quia omnes adulteri, conventus transgressorum (vel, perfidorum; nam {בגדים} sunt perfidi et apostatoe, ut alibi vidimus.)

Here the Prophet entertains another wish: He had before wished that his head were waters, that he might shed tears, and he had wished his eyes to be the fountains of tears; but now, after having duly considered the wickedness of the people, he puts off every feeling of humanity, and as one incensed, he desires to move elsewhere, and wholly to leave the people; for their impiety had so prevailed that he could no longer live among them. It is indeed certain that the Prophet had no common grief, when he perceived that God's dreadful vengeance was not far distant: it is also certain that he was moved and constrained by their detestable conduct to desire to be removed elsewhere. But he speaks not only for his own sake; for he regards his own nation, and expresses his feelings, that he might more effectually touch their hearts. We must then understand, that so great was the sympathy of the Prophet, that he was not satisfied with shedding tears, but that he wished that his whole head would flow into fearn It appears, also, that he was so moved with idignation, that he wished wholly to leave his own people. But, as I have said, his object was to try whether he could restore them to the right way.

He then shews, in this verse, that the Jews had become so detestable, that all the true servants of God wished to be removed far away from them: Who then will set me in the desert? He seeks not for himself another country; he desires not to dwell in a pleasant situation, or that some commodious asylum should be offered to him? but he desires to be placed in the desert, or in the lodging of travelers. He speaks not of those lodgings or inns, which were in villages and towns; but of a lodging in the desert; according to what is the case, when a long and tedious journey is made through forests, some sheds are formed, that when a traveler is over --- taken by the darkness of night, he might be protected by some covering, and not He down in the open air. It is of this kind of lodging that the Prophet speaks: then he no doubt means a shed; but as to the word, we may retain, as I have said, its proper meaning. What is meant is, that to dwell in the desert alllong wild beasts was better than to be among that abominable people. By expressing this wish he inflamed no doubt the fury of the whole people, or at least of most of them; but it was necessary thus forcibly to address them: as they submitted to no kind and wholesome warnings and counsels, they were to be forcibly stimulated and urged by such reproofs as these.

I will leave my people This had an emphatic, bearing; for delightful to every one is

[235] This verse is connected by some with the last chapter: and it seems to belong to it. It forms in all the Hebrew MSS. the 23d verse of the preceding chapter. The phrase, {,{יתן}-{מי ``who will give,'' means a wish, ``O that my head,'' etc., or ``May my head,'' etc. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Arabic, and the Targum express it literally, ``Who will give;'' but the Syriac has, ``O, I wish my head were turned into water.'' --- Ed.

his native soil, and it is also delightful to dwell among one's own people. As then the Prophet wished to be removed into the desert,, and to leave his own people, all his relatives and the nation from which he sprang, and to depart frora them, it follows that they nmst have come to extremities.

And the reason is added, For all are adulterers I take the word {מנאפים} menaphim, adulterers, in a metaphorical sense, as meaning all those who had departed from God, and abandoned themselves to ungodly superstitions, or those who had become so vitiated and corrupt as to retain no integrity. He does not then call them adulterers, because they were given to whoredoms, but because they were immersed in all kinds of defilements. He afterwards calls them an assembly of apostates, or of perfidious men. The word {עצר}, otsar, means to prohibit, to restrain: hence the noun {עצרת} ostaret, means a summoned assembly, when, according to an oath or laws, men are forced to meet; and after the assembly is proclaimed, they dare not depart. Then the Prophet by this word points out the consent and union that existed among that people, as though he had said, that they no less clave to their sins, that if by a solemn rite or authority or ordinance they had been summoned together and were prohibited to depart. We hence see that he condemns the impious consent that was among the people, and also their pertinacity; for they could by no means be restored to a right mind. And for this reason he calls them also {בגדים} begadim, transgressors; for by this word the Hebrews mean, not every kind of sinners, but those who are wholly wicked: and hence the prophets, when, they speak of apostates and revolters, ever call them {בגדים}, begadim, as in this passage. [236] I shall not proceed farther.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast been pleased that the prophetic writings should be preserved for our use, that they may continually excite us to repentance, and that since thou stiffest up daily those who urge us by their exhortations, and draw us, as it were by force, to repent, --- O grant, that there may not be in us such perverseness as we see existed in thine ancient people; but that we may render ourselves teachable, and be so moved by thy threatenings, as to anticipate thy judgment, lest we, mistaking thy forbearance, should at length be visited with that dread, described to us by thy servant Jeremiah, but that we may, on the contrary, find thee to the end to be not only a reconcilable but also a most merciful Father, until we shall at last enjoy a fuller knowledge of thy goodness in thy celestial kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

LECTURE THIRTy-FIFTH

Jeremiah 9:3

[236] This verse may be rendered thus, — O that I, had in the desert the lodging of travellers, Then I would go away from them; For all of them are adulterers, A company of hypocrites. He preferred living in the temporary sheds of travellers, erected in the desert, rather than to live among his own people. How intolerably wicked they must have been! A company, or an assembly, a multitude: the word need not be deemed as retaining its primary idea. The meaning is, that the whole community, the whole people, were hypocrites; they pretended to worship and serve God, and at the same time were idolaters and treacherous and immoral in their conduct. The word for “hypocrites” is derived from one that means a garment, a cloak, a covering; and the verb means to act under a cover, to act deceitfully, or falsely, or hypocritically, or perfidiously. It is rendered “deceivers” by the Septuagint, “prevaricators” by the Vulgate, “liars” by the Syriac, “falsifiers” by the Targum, and “perfidious dealers” by Blayney. — Ed.

3. And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies; but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD.

3. Et jaculati sunt lingua (quidam vertunt, Et jaculare fecerunt; alii, intenderunt linguas suas) arcum suum ad mendacia (alii vertunt, arcum mendacii; sed male;) et non ad veritatem roborati sunt (aut, invaluerunt) in terra; quia a malo ad malum egressi sunt, et me non cognoscunt, dicit Jehova.

Jeremiah confirms what he had said of the near destruction of the people; for, as we have said, the Jews ridiculed threatenings while they thought themselves far from every danger. But the Prophet shews, from the nature of God himself, that they must necessarily perish in a short time; for since God is the judge of the world, and as they were continually advancing in impiety and wickedness, they could no longer be tolerated. This is the meaning.

He first says, that they stretched their tongues as a bow for falsehoods The verb {דרך}, darek, means to walk, and often occurs in this sense; but; it means also to stretch, to bend, and is frequently applied to bows. As it is here in Hiphil, some take it in a transitive sense. It ought in this case to have {י}, iod; but such defect is often found in other places. This sense is the most suitable; that is, that they shot with their tongues falsehood as with a bow. Others improperly construe {שקר}, shikor, in the genitive case, as though he had said, ``the bow of falsehood, but this gives no meaning; and therefore ``the bow of falsehood'' cannot be admitted here. The sense is, that they shot falsehood with their tongue as with a bow, or that they made their tongue to go to falsehood, or that they stretched their tongue like a bow for falsehood. If the last rendering be approved, --- that they stretched their tongue, etc., then the Prophet compares their tongues to bows and falsehoods to arrows. As to the subject itself, there is no difference, whether we read that they shot lies with their tongues, or that they stretched their tongues for lies: for the Prophet simply means that their tongues, as he will hereafter tell us, were so pointed that they pierced one another with slanders and falsehoods, as though one stretched a bow and shot an arrow. He then intimates, that all their words were deadly, for they were intent on slanders and falsehoods, so that there was no intercourse without a mortal wound.

He then adds, that they were not strong for the truth Some read, ``They have been strong, but not for the truth;'' others, ``They have been strong as to the truth,'' or for the truth: but I think that the Prophet's meaning is different, --- that having checked the truth, they took more liberty for themselves, as though he had said that they triumphed when all faithfulness and rectitude were destroyed; for by the word, {אמונה} amune, the Prophet no doubt means that fidelity by which men ought to carry on their concerns one with another. Since, then, there was no uprightness among them, he says, that they marched forth as victorious when they trod under foot what was just and right. It is indeed a proof of extreme impiety, when men, trampling upon faithfulness and equity, allow themselves every kind of licentiousness. Some give this explanation, --- that they ruled, not through their faithfulness or virtues, for they had crept into and obtained honors by wicked and deceitful arts.

And it. is indeed certain that the Prophet directs his discourse, not against the common people, but against the chief men, who had attained their power by frauds. But I am satisfied with the view that I have already given, --- that they had become strong because there was no truth, as when we say that the blind rule in darkness, when everything is in confusion. The meaning is, that they were not only given up to their sins, but that they also triumphed over fidelity and justice, by allowing themselves every liberty, as there was no one who dared to say a word to restrain them. He says, that they thus became strong through the whole land; for he sets forth here the deplorable state of the people in general; as though he had said, ``There is no hope of deliverance left, for truth and faithfulness are everywhere oppressed.'' [237]

An explanation follows, --- that they proceeded from evil to evil; that is, they obstinately went on in their evil doings; for to go forth means the same as to pass. They then passed from evil to evil; that is, when they had done one evil, no repentance entered their hearts, so as to turn back; but they continued their wickedness, and aceunrelated evils on evils. We now then understand what the Prophet means; for he sets forth their pertinacity in evil deeds, and at the same time shews that there was no evidence of amendment, for they passed from one bad deed to another like it.

And me have they not known, saith Jehovah He shews here what is the source of all evils; they had cast aside every knowledge and every thought of God. We indeed know that when God is really known, his fear must necessarily influence our hearts; and the knowledge of God begets reverence and a regard for religion. It is indeed true, that God is somewhat known by even the ungodly and the wicked, and that they have some notions respecting him; but it is no more than an empty knowledge. When indeed we are fully persuaded that God is the judge of the world, and when we have also a knowledge of his goodness and paternal favor, we necessarily fear him and spontaneously and willingly worship and serve him. Ignorance of God, then, is a kind of madness which carries men headlong to every sort of impiety. On this account, God complains that he was not known by the people, for the fear of him was not in them. It follows ---

Jeremiah 9:4

4. Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders.

4. Et vir a socio suo cavete (hoc est, caveat; ad verbum, custodiat se; caveat igitur sibi quisque a socio,) et super omni fratre (ad verbum) ne confidatis (hoc est, nemo confidat proprio fratre;) quia omnis frater supplantando supplantat, et omnis socius fraudulenter incedit.

[237] The ancient versions differ in rendering the first clauses of this verse: "They have bent their tongue like a bow; falsehood and not truth has prevailed over the land," Septuagint; — "And they have stretched their tongue like a bow of falsehood, and not of truth; they have become strong in the land," Vulgate; — "Their tongue as with their own bow have they shot; by falsity and perfidiousness they have become great in the land," Syriac; — "Their tongues for falselhood have they bent, as a bow; and prevailed has perfidy over the land," Arabic. Blayney makes a conjectural emendation, and Houbigant and Horsley make another; but neither is necessary. The literal version is as follows, — And they bend their tongue, their lying bow; And not for truth are they strong in the land. "Their lying bow," or "their bow of falsehood;" it was a bow by which they shot lies; they employed their tongues for this purpose. — Ed.

In this verse the Prophet describes the extreme wickedness of the people. For though sometimes thefts, robberies, frauds, slaughters, perjuries, sorceries prevail, yet some regard for near relations remains; but it is monstrous when all relative affections are destroyed. As then, even in the most wicked, there remain some natural affections, called storgoe by philosophers, it follows, that men depart wholly from nature and become wild beasts, when these no longer exist. This is the import of what is here said.

There is a similar passage in Micah 7:5, 6. The idea is there indeed more fully expanded; for the Prophet adds,

``From her who sleeps in thy bosom guard the doors of thy mouth; for the son lies in wait for his father, and the daughter delivers up her mother to death; and the chief enemies of man are his own domestics.''

The prophets then mainly agree in shewing, that there was no humanity left among flmm; for the son, forgetful of his duty, rose up against his father, and every one was perfidious towards his own friend, and a brother spared not his own brother.

Let a man then guard himself This is not an admonition, as though the Prophet exhorted men to be wary; but he only shews that there was no fidelity; for every one was perfidious and unfaithful towards his own friend, and even a brother acted unjustly towards his own brother. It hence follows, that the Jews are charged with being natural monsters; for they were deservedly objects of detestation, when they cast aside every care for their own blood, and as far as they could, destroyed everything like humanity. He says that brothers by supplanting supplanted, that is, craftily deceived and circumvented their own brothers. The verb {עקב} okob, is to be taken mttaphorically; it is derived from the heel of the foot, and means to oppress the simple by secret arts. He says also, that all friends acted fraudulently. Of this kind of speaking we have spoken on Jeremiah 6:28; for we found there the same complaint; and the Prophet then said the Jews were like iron and brass, because they had hardened themselves so as to be capable of any cruelty. This sort of speaking often occurs, when the word {רכיל}, rekil, is connected with the verb {הלך} elak; and they who are the most learned in the language say, that this word is never found in Scripture but in connection with the verb to go or to walk. They hence conclude that some particular person is meant, that is, one who goes about veiled or deceitfully, and rambles and runs here and there, that he may find some opportunity of deceiving and cheating. It cannot be taken here for slandering, as we have also stated on chapter the sixth: it is too unmeaning. It is found indeed in this sense in Leviticus 19:16,

``Go not about a slanderer among thy people;''

where some render it a whisperer. But the Prophet no doubt condemns here the frauds and deceitful crafts, by which they deceived and cheated one another: for {רכל}, recal signifies a merchant; and as it is often the case that traders act cunningly and practice crafty artifices, the Hebrews call that man {רכיל} racal, fraudulent and wickedly crafty, whose object is to deceive and cheat. And we see that this is the meaning in this place, as it designates those who circumvented one another: for the Prophet says, that they were foolish who trusted in brothers or friends; and he

gives the reason, because brothers supplanted one another, and friends went about fraudulently. It follows ---

Jeremiah 9:5

5. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity.

5. Et vir proximo sue (socio) mentitur (hoc est, quisque; nam {איש} ponitur indefinite apud Hebroeos pro nota universali; quisque ergo proximum suum circumvenit, nempe mendacio; nam {התל} significat mentiri,) et veritatem non loquitur; docuerunt linguas suas loqui mendacium (hoc est, linguas suas formarunt ad mendacia,) male agere fatigati sunt (hoc est, male agendo fatigantur.)

Jeremiah goes on with the same subject. He says that fidelity had so disappeared among the Jews, that every one endeavored to deceive his neighbor. Hence it followed, that they were withhout any shame. Some sense of shame at least remains among men, when they have to do with their own friends; for though they may be wholly given to gain, and to indulge in falsehoods, yet when they transact business with friends, they retain some regard for equity, and shame checks their wickedness: but when there is no difference made between friends and strangers, it follows that their character is become altogether brutal. This is what the Prophet meant.

And he adds, that they spoke not the truth He now says that they were liars, not in this or that particular business; but that they were perfidious and deceitful in everything. This clause then is not to be limited to some special acts of fraud; but it is the same as though he had said, that they knew not what truth was, or what it was to act with good faith and to speak honestly to their neighhours; for they were wholly imbued with deceits, and no truth could come out of their mouth.

And for the same purpose he says, that they had taught their tongues to speak falsehood. The expression in this clause is stronger; for he means that they were wholly given to deceit, as by long use they had formed their tongues for this work. The tongue ought to be the representative of the mind, according to the old saying; for why was the tongue formed, but in order that men may communicate with one another? For the thoughts are hidden, and they come forth when we speak with each other. But the Prophet says that the order of nature was by them inverted, for they had taught their tongues to lie We also hence learn that they had no fidelity whatever; for their very tongues had been taught to deceive: as when one by practice has learnt anything, it is what he does readily; so when the tongues are formed by continual use and inured to lying, they can do nothing else.

He says at last, that they wearied themselves with evil deeds. This is indeed an hyperbolical language; but yet the Prophet very fitly sets forth the deplorable state of the people, --- that they practiced the doing of evil even to weariness. As when any one is seized with some foolish lust, he spares no labor and does himself much harm, but feels not his wearied state as long as he is engaged, for his ardor dementares him: so he says now, that they were wearied in doing evil. When a hunter pursues the game, he undergoes much more labor than any common workman, or any husbandman. We see that even kings and courtiers, while hunting, are so blinded, that

they see no danger nor feel any weariness. So we find that men given to pleasure, when lust draws them here and there, feel no concern for the greatest weariness. According to this sense then the Prophet says, that they were wearied in doing evil, as though he had said, that they were so devoted to wickedness, that the pleasure of doing evil wholly blinded them and made them mad. [238]

We now perceive the Prophet's meaning: He confirms, as I have said, what he had stated before. He had threatened the people with utter ruin; they were secure and heedless, and despised all his denuncitations. He now shews, from God's nature and office, that ruin was nigh them, though they feared it not and thought themselves abundantly safe. But if God be the judge of the world, as it will be hereafter proved, how is it possible for him to connive perpetually at so great wickedness? And to shew this he also adds ---

Jeremiah 9:6

6. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD.

6. Tu habitas in dolo (hoc est, inter homines dolosos; nam subaudiendum est nomen, quemadmodum soepe alibi vidimus genitivum casum poni pro epitheto, et subaudiri nomen substantivum; Tu igitur habitas inter homines dolosos;) in dolo renuunt cognoscere me, dicit Jehova.

The Prophet here introduces God as the speaker, that the Jews might know that they had not to do with mortal man. For they might, according to their usual perverseness, have raised this objection, ``Thou indeed severely condemnest us, and treatest us reproachfully; but who has made thee our judge?'' Lest then they should think that the words which he had hitherto declared, were the words of man, he interposes the authority of God, Thou, he says, dwellest in the midst of a deceitful people

But we must observe that this admonition to the Prophet was necessary for two reasons. For when God searches the minds and hearts of men by his word, ministers of the word are necessary to exercise this jurisdiction, men endued with wisdom, understanding, and prudence. The word, says the apostle, is like a two --- edged sword, or it is one that cuts on both sides, for it penetrates into the hearts and thoughts of man and into their very marrow. (Hebrews 4:12.) We also know what Paul says,

``When an unbeliever comes into your assembly, his conscience is searched; so that he will be constrained to fall down and to give glory to God.'' (1 Corinthians 14:24, 25.)

[238] The whole verse may he thus rendered, — And they deceive, every one his neighbor, And the truth they speak not; They have taught their tongue the word of falsehood; With perverting have they wearied themselves. The verb for “deceive” means to mock, to trifle with, to play the fool with. Their object was to befool their neighbors by cheating and deceiving them. “The word,” or the matter, “of falsehood,” is falsehood itself, or sheer falsehood. The Vulgate and the Syriac’s version is, “They have taught their tongue to speak falsehood.” To teach the tongue false-hood, was to habituate it to tell lies. The last line is differently rendered. The Septuagint deviates far from the original. The version of the Vulgate is, “They have labored to act unjustly;” and this comes near the meaning; only “to act unjustly” is rather to act pervertingly: they wrested and turned everything from its right course and meaning; and they labored in perverting things, until they wearied themselves. Falsehood requires more labor than truth. — Ed.

To the same purpose is this saying of Christ,

``When the Spirit is come, He will judge the world,''

(John 16:8)

for by the Spirit He means the preaching of the Gospel. It is then necessary that the ministers of the word, in order that they may faithfully and profitably perform their office, should be taught to understand the deceits and subterfuges by which men are wont to deceive. As then there are many hidden things in the hearts of men, he who would effectually teach must know that the innermost recesses of the heart must be probed and searched. The Prophet had heard from God that the people, over whom He was appointed, were fallacious and filled with guiles and frauds: Thou, He says, dwellest in the midst of a deceitful people; as though he had said, ``Thou hast to do with dishonest men, who not only openly betray their wickedness, but also deceive when they pretend any repentance or profess obedience to God: that they may not therefore weaken or cajole thy resolution by their deceptions, settle it in thy mind that thou wilt have to contend with their wiles.'' This is one reason.

There is another reason; for as God's servants ought to know their wiles, which they are bidden to reprove, so there is need of courage and perseverance, lest hypocrisy should dishearten them: for such a thought as this may occur to the minds of God's servants, ``What shall I do? for hidden to me are the thoughts of men: now the truth ought to penetrate into the whole soul; but I know not what lies hid within in any one.'' Thus pious teachers might be weakened in their efforts and disheartened, or wholly discouraged, unless God supported them. It was then for this reason that Jeremiah was expressly told, that He had to do with a deceitful and false people. [239]

He afterwards adds, Through guile they refuse to know me God had before complained, that he was not known by the people; but he now exaggerates their crime by saying, that they craftily evaded every light, as though he had said, that they could not plead ignorance or any levity; for through guile, says God, they refuse to know me. As they wholly flattered themselves with deceptions, they designedly extinguished, as far as they could, the light. By guile then he means that obstinate craftiness by which the people cast aside every instruction. It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 9:7

7. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people?

7. Propterea sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Ecce ego examinabo eos (vel, conflabo; ad verbum, examinans, vel, conflans,) et probabo eos; nam quomodo agerem cum filia (ad verbum, a facie filiae) populi mei?

[239] Houbigant, Horsley, and Venema have suggested emendations as to this verse, derived in some measure from the Septuagint. A part of the first word, {,{שבתך is connected by the Septuagint with the former verse; for it is divided into {שב} and {תך} As to this division the preceding authors agree; but they differ as to the construction, though mainly the same in sense. The most probable is that of Venema, for he only divides the word, and gives this version, Burst forth does robbery upon robbery, deceit, on deceit; They refuse to know me, saith Jehovah. Burst forth, or boil --- exoestuat, is certainly not the meaning of {שב} which signifies to return, to turn, to restore, etc. Then the rendering would be, Return does guile for guile, deceit for deceit. The first word is rendered ``usury --- {τόκος}'' by the Septuagint, but {תך} means guile or fraud. See Psalm 10:7; Psalm 55:12; Psalm 72:14. The meaning is, that their dishonest dealings were reciprocal: the cheats cheated one another. Our version agrees with the Vulgate and the Syriac, and is adopted by Blayney: and he concludes from the end of this verse, that the speaker from the 2d verse is not the Prophet, but God; who, adopting the language of man, intimates his wish to leave a people so wicked. But this conclusion is not necessary; for the prophets often introduce sentences of this kind. --- Ed.

Jeremiah, speaking in God's name, concludes that the chastisement, of which he had spoken, was necessary; And what I have already said appears more clearly from this verse, --- that he brings to light their sins, that they might know that they could not escape God's hand, who is a just avenger of wickedness; for they had extremely provoked him by their petulance and obstinacy.

I will try or melt them, he says, and I will prove them As they put on a false color, he says that there was a trial needful, as when any one shews copper or any other metal for gold, he is disproved by trial. Any impostor might otherwise sell dross for silver: the spurious metal, that is passed as gold or silver, must be proved; it must be cast into the fire and melted. As then the Jews thought that they had honest pretences to cover their baseness, God gives this answer, that he had yet a way to discover their deceitfulness, and as it were tells them, ``The goldsmith, when any one brings dross for silver, or copper for gold, has a furnace, and he tries it; so will I try and melt you; for you think that you can dazzle ray eyes by false pretences: this will avail you nothing.'' In short, God intimates that he had means ready at hand to discover their deceitfulness, and that thus their hypocrisy would be of no advantage to them, as his judgments would be like a furnace. As then stubble or wood, cast into the furnace, is immediately burnt, so hypocrites cannot endure God's judgment. They indeed at first exhibit some brightness, until God tries them; but their deceits must eventually be discovered; and they themselves will be consumed when they come to be really proved. This is the meaning.

And the reason is added, For how should I do with the daughter of my people? This may be applied to Jeremiah himself; but it would be a strained meaning. He then continues, I have no doubt, to speak in God's name; How then should I do, or act, with the daughter of my people? God speaks here as one deliberating; and thus he more fully proves the Jews guilty; for since he admits them as judges or counsellors, they could give no other reply. We hence see that this question is very emphatic; for the Prophet intimates, that except the Jews were beyond measure stupid, they could no longer flatter themselves in their sins, so as to demand to be otherwise treated by God, as they had in so many ways and with s.uch perversity procured vengeance for themselves. [240]

But we hence learn that it is right that judgment should begin at the house of God, as it is elsewhere said. (1 Peter 4:17.) God indeed will not pass by anytliing without punishing it: hence the heathens must at last stand before his tribunal. But as he is nearer to his Church, their impiety, who profess themselves to be as it were his domestics, is less tolerable, as though he had said, ``I have chosen you to be my peculiar people, and have taken you under my care and protection; when ye become intractable, what remains for me to do, but to try you, as ye act so unfaithfully towards me.'' It follows ---

Jeremiah 9:8

[240] All the ancient versions (except the Vulgate) and the Targum read, as though {{בת ``daughter,'' were {{רעת ``wickedness,'' as in Jeremiah 7:12. Both Houbigant and Horsley adopt this reading; and the first gives the meaning of ``thus'' to ,{{איך and not ``how.'' Then the verse would be, Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Behold I will melt them that I may try them; For thus will I do because of the wickedness of my people. The rendering of the last line, according; to the received text, might be this, which is nearly the Vulgate, --- For how should I deal otherwise with the daughter of my people? The passage runs better in this way, than according to the proposed emendation. --- Ed.

8. Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit; one speaketh peacably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait.

8. Sagitta tracta (ut quidam vertunt; alii, occidens) lingua eorum; mendacium loquitur; os ejus pacem ad proximum loquetur, et in medio sui (hoc est, intra viscera sua, intus) ponet insidias.

The Prophet again complains of the deceitfulness of their tongues; and he compares them to deadly, or drawn out arrows. Gold is said to be drawn out, when refined by repeated meltings; so also arrows, when sharpened, are more piercing. The Prophet then says, that their tongues were like deadly or sharpened arrows: how so? because they ever spoke guile, by either slandering or circumventing others. But the expression is general; and the Prophet no doubt meant to include all modes of deceiving.

For it afterwards follows, With the mouth they speak peace; that is, every one professed friendship, and his words were honey; and yet within he did set up, or concealed intrigues. Here in other words he sets forth their perfidy; for the tongue and the heart differed. They shewed by the tongue what was different from the sentiment of the heart. Hence he says, that they set up treacheries in the midst of them, or in their hearts, while they spoke peace with the mouth, that is, pretended brotherly kindness. [241] At last he repeats again what he had said before, (Jeremiah 5:9) ---

Jeremiah 9:9

9. Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

9. An super hoc non visitabo eos, dicit Jehova? an in gente quae talis est (quae est sicut haec) non se ulciscetur anima mea?

We have already met with this verse; it will therefore be enough briefly to refer to what it contains. God shews here, that except he denied himself he must necessarily punish the Jews. How so? He takes it as granted that he is the judge of the world: he had said that the Jews were not only become wicked in one thing, but were so given up to all kinds of wickedness, that they wearied themselves; what then was to be done? God would not have acted in a manner worthy of himself, nor preserved consistency, had he not punished such men; for he must have changed his nature, had he not hated such a perverse nation. But he speaks after the manner of men when he mentions vengeance; for we know that no passions belong to God, as it has been often stated: but as he hates wickedness, so he is said to execute vengeance, when he appears as a judge and chastises those by whom he has been provoked to wrath.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cease not by our sins to provoke thee more

[241] The word, {,{וחוש means ``killing'' or slaying; see Genesis 22:10; Genesis 37:31; Exodus 12:6. Its primary meaning, as Parkhurst thinks, is to shed, or to drain off, either blood from animals, or juice from grapes, or gold from dross. But it is used in the sense of slaying. The Septuagint and the Vulgate render it here, ``wounding,'' --- A killing arrow is their tongue; Deceit it speaks; With his mouth does one speak peace to his neighbor, But in his heart he sets an ambush for him. Literally, ``his ambush,'' that is, the ambush of which he is the object. This form of speech is often in Hebrew. See Job 28:10. ``Penit ei insidias`` is the Vulgate. Blayney gives a paraphrase, not a version, --- But inwardly will he resolve to fall upon him by surprise. The future tense here, as in many other instances, is used as a present tense, and designed to shew the habitual practice of the people. The same is done in the Welsh language: the future tense is continually used to express a present action. --- Ed.

and more, we may at least be warned by thy threatenings and the words of thy prophets, and may not continue obstinate in evil nor pertinaciously resist thy will, but that we may on the contrary learn to anticipate thy judgment and thus receive thy corrections, so that our sins may be hated by us, and that we may become judges of ourselves, in order that we may obtain pardon, and that having obtained it we may not doubt ever to call on thee as our Father, until thou at length gatherest us unto that blessed inheritance, which has been procured for us by the blood of thine only Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirty-Sixth

Jeremiah 9:10

10. For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none can pass through them; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone.

10. Super montes tollam (vel assumam) fletum et lamentationem, et super pascua (vel, loca amoena; alii vertunt, tuguria) deserti planctum; quia vastata sunt (alii vertunt, incensa;) ita non sit vir transiens, et non audiunt vocem pecudum; ab ave coelorum (hoc est, ab avibus) usque ad bestiam migrarunt, abierunt.

The Prophet had exhorted others to lament and to bewail. He now comes forth as though none had ears to attend to his admonition. As then he himself undertakes to mourn and to lament, he no doubt indirectly condemns the insensibility of the whole people. He saw by the spirit of prophecy, that all the rest thought what he said incredible and therefore fabulous. For though the kingdom of Judah was at that time much wasted, and the kingdom of Israel wholly fallen, they yet continued secure and heedless when they ought to have expected God's vengeance every day, and even every hour. Since then there was such insensibility in the people, the Prophet here prepares himself for lamentation and mourning.

I will take up, he says, mourning and lamentation for the mountains The words may be explained, ``I will take up mourning, which shall ascend as far as the mountains;'' but the cause of mourning seems rather to be intended; for it immediately follows, and weeping for the pastures of the desert Had not this clause been added, the former meaning might be taken, that is, that mourning would be so loud as to penetrate into the mountains or ascend into the highest parts. But as Jeremiah connects the two clauses, for the mountains, and for the pastures of the desert, the other meaning is much more appropriate, --- that the confidence of the people was very absurd, as they thougilt themselves beyond danger, dwelling as they did on the plains; for the enemies, he says, shall leave nothing untouched; they shall come to the mountains and to the pastures of the desert. It hence follows, that they were foolish who promised themselves quietness on the plains, where the enemy could easily come.

We now then understand the Prophet's meaning: he sets here his own fear and solicitude in contrast with the stupor of the whole people. I will raise, he says, weeping and lamentation for the mountains: but others remained secure and thoughtless in their pleasures. He then shews, that while they were blind, his eyes were open,

and he saw the coming ruin which was now at hand. And he sets the mountains and pastures of the desert in opposition to the level country. For when a country is laid waste, we know that still a retreat is sought on mountains; for enemies dread ambushes there, and access is not easy where the roads are narrow. Then the Prophet says, that even the mountains would not be beyond the reach of danger, for the enemies would march there: he says the same of the pastures of the desert. We hence learn how absurd was their confidence who thought themselves safe because they inhabited the plain country, which was the most accessible.

As to the word {נאות} naut, it comes from {נוה} hue, which means to dwell. [242] He then takes {נאות} haut, as signifying pleasant places, or pastures. Some render it sheds or cottages. David uses the same word in Psalm 23:2, in speaking of God's favor to him, who was pleased to become his shepherd:

``He makes me to lie down,'' he says, ``in pleasant places.''

But the Prophet no doubt means pastures here. And he calls them the pastures of the desert. The word {מדבר} midbar, we know, is taken to designate not only waste and sterile places, but also a mountainous country. Though then the richest pastures were on mountains, yet the Jews were wont to call them deserts: there is therefore nothing absurd in saying, the pleasant places or pastures of the desert. But we must bear in mind the contrast, of which I have reminded you: for he intended to condemn the foolish confidence of the people, who thought that they were dwelling in safety, when yet they were exposed to enemies, and had no means to repel or retard their progress.

Because they are laid waste, He says. This word may be taken in another sense, ``burnt up;'' but it is not suitable here. He says then that these places are laid waste, so that no one passed through. He means that mountains would not only be without inhabitants, but would be so deserted and solitary that there would be none passing over them. There would then be none to frequent them. It hence follows, that there would be no inhabitants, He then adds, that no voice of cattle was heard; as though he had said, that their enemies would take away as their spoil whatever should be found there: for the wealth of mountains consists in cattle; for there is neither sowing nor reaping there; but inhabitants of mountains get their living and whatever is necessary to support life, from flesh and skin and milk and cheese. When therefore the Prophet declares that there would be no voice of cattle, it is the same as though he had said, that the mountains would become altogether uninhabited, for their enemies would take away all the cattle found there.

He then adds, From the bird of the heavens to the earthly beast they shall migrate and depart [243] Here he seems again indirectly to reprove the insensibility of the

[242] It is not from this root, but from {,{אוה to desire, in Niphal, {נאוה} to be desirable. The noun means desirable or pleasant places or spots. See Psalm 23:2; Jeremiah 25:37; Joel 1:19. --- Ed.

[243] The whole verse is as follows, — 10. For the mountains will I raise weeping and wailing, And for the pleasant places of the desert, a lamentation; For they are desolate, without any one passing through, And they hear not the voice of cattle; From the bird of heaven even to the beast, They have migrated, they have gone away. The “pleasant places” were “desolate;” and “in the mountains” no “voice of cattle” was heard. No one “passing through” explains the desolation. The word is improperly rendered, “burnt up,” in our version and by Blayney. It was used before in the sense of desolation, Jeremiah 4:7; and it ought to be so rendered in Jeremiah 2:15. In the last line, the migration refers to birds, and the going away to the beasts. In none

people, as though he had said, that the birds would feel it to be the judgment of God, while yet men were wholly insensible; and that there would be a similar feeling in brute animals; as though he had said, that there would be more understanding in birds and animals than in the Jews, who had not only been created in the image of God, but had also been enlightened as to the truth of salvation; for shine among them did the truth of God in the law. Hence the Prophet shews that this stupidity was most shameful; for they were as stupid as if they had no thought and no understanding, while yet birds acknowledged the vengeance of God, and brute animals were terrified by it. We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet. It follows ---

Jeremiah 9:11

11. And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.

11. Et ponam Jerusalem in acervos, in locum draconum; et urbes Jehudah ponam vastitatem, ut non sit habitator.

The Prophet comes now toJerusalem and the neighhouring cities. He said before, that ruin would reach the mountains and the farthest recesses; but he says now, I will turn Jerusalem into heaps This seemed incredible, for it was a well fortified city, and also full of inhabitants to defend it: we know besides that the Jews were in confederacy with the kingdom of Egypt. This denunciation then was extremely unwelcome to the Jews. But though they thought themselves hitherto safe, yet the Prophet set before their eyes their final destruction. They indeed regarded it as a fable; but they found too late, that the despisers of God gain no advantage in hardening· themselves against his threatenings. We shall meet with this verse again; I shall therefore now pass over it lightly.

He says, that it would be hereafter a place for dragons; as though he had said, that it would be no longer inhabited. He declares the same respecting the cities of Judah, --- that they would all be a waste. We hence see how courageous and persevering a mind was Jeremiah endued with, that he dared to preach thus in the midst of the city, and to set himself in opposition to the king and his counsellors, and to the whole people, who wished to be soothed with flatteries, and who had been thus treated by the false prophets. As then Jeremiah was thus bold, as a celestial herald, to denounce on them this dreadful calamity, we hence learn that he was endued with the power of God, and that he did not speak as one commissioned by men; for had he not been sustained by God's power, he must have been a hundred times disheartened, nor would he have dared to speak a word. This invincible courage seals his doctrine; ibr we hence with certainty learn, that it proceeded from God, because the wonderful power of the ttoly Spirit was evident. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 9:12

12. Who is the wise man, that may understand this? and who is he to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth and is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through?

12. Quis vir prudens ut intelligat hoc? (ad verbum, et intelligens,) et ad quem loquutum est os Jehovae, ut annunciet quare perierit terra, vastata sit instar deserti,

of the ancient versions is this distinction intimated. — Ed.

ut nemo transeat? ({עבר} {מבלי} absque transeunte, ad verbum.)

Here the Prophet reproves more sharply the insensibility of the people, because none attended to the judgments of God; for though they were apparent, no one considered them. The question arose from astonishment; for it was like something dreadfully monstrous, that so few among the people knew that God would be the punisher of crimes so apparent to all. Had they a particle of understanding, they must have known that a dreadful calamity was nigh at hand, since they continued in so many ways to provoke God. And now that the labor of the Prophet, after having said what ought to have roused them all, had been all in vain; was not this doubly monstrous? For he had spent a long time, and had never ceased to cry; and yet all were deaf, nay, his teaching was treated with contempt.

Hence is his astonishment, when he says, Who is a wise man? he intimates that there was hardly one in a hundred whom the fear of God influenced. It must then be remembered, that the Prophet complains of the few number of those who perceived:, that it could not be but that God would shortly put forth his hand to punish the wickedness which then everywhere prevailed. But yet he exhorts all the faithful children of God to disregard the nmltitude, and to gather courage, and to make more account of God's word than of the contumacy of them all. There are then two things in this sentence; for the question means, that few could be found among the people who were wise, and who applied their minds and thoughts to consider the miserable state of the people; but, on the other hand, he intimates that it is true wisdom in God's faithful servants, not to despond, and not to follow the nmltitude. He then intimates that they are alone truly wise who consider God's judgments before He openly executes them. There is a similar sentence in Psalm 107: 43; for the Prophet, after having spoken of God's judgments, which are visible through the whole world, exclaims,

``Who is a wise man, that he may understand these things?''

as though he had said, that though the works of God, which evidence both his goodness and his judgment, might indeed be observed in every part of the world, yet that all were blind. The Prophet then by this exclamation reprobates the insensibility of men, who overlook God's judgments, though they are apparent before their eyes. So also the same thing is meant in this place, Who is a wise man? But we must further notice the second thing, to which I have referred, namely, that all the faithful are here encouraged, as the Prophet teaches us, that this is the rule of wisdom, --- to open our eyes to see God's judgments, which are hid from the world: while others are drawn away by their lusts or sunk in their stupor, the Prophet teaches us, that we are wise, when we duly consider, as I have already said, what the Lord has made known to us in his word. Hence it follows, that all the wise men of this world are foolish, who so harden themselves, that they do not perceive in God's word what is yet open to their eyes. Who then is a wise man, and he will understand these things?

He afterwards adds, To whom has the mouth of Jehovah spoken to declare this? He complains here that there were no prophets. He said, at the beginning of the verse, that there were none wise, because all heedlessly despised the threatenings and judgments of God: now in the second place he adds, there were none to arouse

the careless people who were asleep in their sins. But by this sentence he claims authority for himself; for though he was without associates and assistants, he yet intimates that his teaching was not, on that account of less value: ``Be it,'' he says, (for he speaks by way of concession,) ``be it, that there is no prophet to recall the people from their sins, to exhort them to repent, to terrify the ungodly: however this may be, yet the Lord has appointed me to teach and to exhort the people.'' We hence see that the Prophet claims for himself full and complete authority, though he alone denounced God's vengeance. Many indeed then boasted that they were prophets; but they were only false flatterers. When the Prophet saw that many abused the name, and did not perform the office faithfully and sincerely, he set himself in opposition to them all; as though he had said, ``It is enough that the Lord has commanded me to do this; I therefore denounce on you this calamity, which ye heedlessly disregard, because false teachers deeeive you by their mischievous adulations.''

Who will declare, he says, why the land is to perish, and to be laid waste like the desert, so that there should be no inhabitant? We may apply this to two periods. For when Jeremiah spoke, the kingdom was yet standing, and, as I have said, the Jews were not so subdued as to humble themselves before God: they were therefore still indulging themselves in their sins. Now whence did this indulgence proceed, except from their prosperous condition? Yet the Prophet says that the land had perished, and justly so; but he says this, because he did not judge of the people's state according to what it appeared then to be, but according to the judgment which he saw by the prophetic spirit was impending over them. And we may extend this farther; as though Jeremiah had said, ``When God shall have so chastised this people, that there may be as it were a visible monument of celestial wrath; there shall yet be then no prophets to remind them whence these evils have proceeded.'' This indeed we know was the case, when the city was partly burnt and partly demolished, and the temple pulled down: the contumacy of the people was so great, that their hearts were stone, and their minds iron. There was then a monstrous hardness in that calamity. They indeed cried for their evils; but no one perceived that God was executing what he had denounced for so many years. For Jeremiah, as we have said, exercised his office of teaching for a long time: but before he began, Isaiah had already been were out; and before Isaiah, Micah had prophesied. Though, however, threatenings had been renewed daily for a hundred years, and terrors had been announced, yet there was no one who attended. [244]

This passage, then, may be thus explained, --- That when threatenings should appear by the effect not to have been announced in vain, yet the people would even then be insensible, for no one would attend to nor consider God's judgment: they

[244] Somewhat a different view may be taken of this verse, as it will appear from the following version, — Who is the man that is wise, And he will understand this, — And to whom the mouth of Jehovah has spoken, And he will declare it, — Even why destroyed is the land, Made waste like the desert, without a traveler. The wise man is the same with him to whom God had spoken: and what he had to understand and to declare was the reason why the land was destroyed. Then in the next verse God himself, by the mouth of his prophet, makes this known. “Made waste” is rendered “burnt up” by theSeptuagint and the Vulgate, but desolated, or desolate, by the Targum, Syriac, and Arabic; and no doubt rightly, as “without a traveler,” or one passing through, explains what is meant: in like manner, “without an inhabitant,” in the preceding verse, is an explanation of “the cities of Judah” being made “desolate,” or rather, entirely desolate. — Ed.

would all indeed feel their evils, but no one would regard the hand of him who smote them, as it is said in another place. (Isaiah 9:13.) Either meaning may be allowed; but, as I think, the Prophet here deplores the hardness and contumacy of the people at that time; as though he had said, that there were none who considered God's judgments, and that there was no prophet to rouse those who were torpid. But yet, as it has been stated, he thus intimates, that he had sufficient authority, though he had no associate or assistant; for he had been chosen by God, and had been sent to carry this message. It follows ---

Jeremiah 9:13-15

13. And the LORD saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein;

13. Et dixit Jehova, Quia dereliquerunt legem meam, quam posui coram ipsis (ad faciem ipsorum, ad verbum,) et non audierunt vocem meam, et non ambulaverunt in ea (hoc est, secundum ipsam;)

14. But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them:

14. Et ambulaverunt post cogitationes (vel, post contumaciam; nam utroque modo vertunt hoc nomen, post cogitationes ergo) cordis sui, et post Baalim, quos docuerunt patres ipsorum:

15. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.

15. Propterea sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Ecce ego cibans (cibabo) populum hunc ameritudine, et potabo aquis veneni (vel, venenatis; alii vertunt, aquis fellis; nam {ראש} utrumque significat.)

Jeremiah now confirms what I have stated, and more fully explains it, --- that though no teacher or a disciple was found in the land, yet there was sufficient power in God's word alone, and that his judgment depended not on the will or the perceptions of men. After having then complained that all were foolish, and that there were no prophets to reprove their security and indifference, he adds, Thus saith Jehovah Here he sets God in opposition to all men, to the king and his courtiers, as well as to the common people. Who then is a wise man? as though He looked around him; and there was no man who considered. he was then in suspense; and afterwards he said, ``There is no prophet to rouse them from their usual stupor.'' He remained still in suspense; and then he turned to God and said, ``But Jehovah has spoken;'' that is, ``Be it, that they are like brute beasts, though they arrogate to themselves great wisdom; nevertheless God speaks, and we ought to be satisfied. We ought then to be silent, and to make no stir; though no one approves, though no one attends to God speaking, there is yet sufficient authority and power in his voice alone.'' We now then more fully understand the Prophet's design: He had said that all men were stupid, and that there was no prophet; and now, on the other hand, he shews that God was not silent nor asleep.

Thus saith Jehovah, Because this people have forsaken my law, etc. He shews that the cause of all evils was a departure from God's law. No one was willing to confess this, and all the prophets were silent; yet Jeremiah says here, that the cause

was to be asked of God why he so grievously afflicted the people. But he takes as granted what was most true, that God was not without reason displeased with the chosen people. It hence then follows, that they were apost, ates, and had forsaken the law: God would not have otherwise so severely punished them. Though then no one perceived the cause of their evils, though no one shewed it, yet God himself ought to have been attended to, who said, that they had forsaken the law

He then adds, Which I have set before their face. Here he takes away every pretense for ignorance; for they might have objected and said, that the doctrine of the law was obscure, and that they were deceived through want of knowledge. The Prophet anticipates this objection by saying, that the law was set before them; that is, that they were abundantly taught what was right, what pleased God; so that they now in vain and even falsely pleaded ignorance; for they went astray wilfully by closing their eyes against clear light., For this is what he means by saying that the law was set before their face: and it is what Moses often repeats,

``Behold, I have set before thee,''
(Deuteronomy 11:32, and elsewhere:)

and this he said, that the people might not seek for themselves vain excuses for ignorance, as they were wont to do.

But while we are not to overlook this circumstance, we may yet hence learn this general truth, --- that the law of God is not so obscure but that we may learn from it what is right. When, therefore, Moses is quoted, and the prophets are added as interpreters, there is no ground for us to evade, or to make the excuse, that the truth is too hidden or profound; for the law is set before our face, that, the will of God may be made known to us. Whosoever then can read and hear what God has revealed once to the world by Moses and the prophets is inexcusable; for we are taught here, and in other places, that it is a mere perverseness in all who hear the law, when they do not obey: I have set the law, he says, before their face

And he adds, And they have not hearkened to my voice, and have not walked in it He defines what it is not to hearken to his voice: for even hypocrites pretend to hear, and nod with their ears like asses; but as they obey not God when he speaks, it is evident that they are deaf. Hence He says that they walked not in his voice, [245] that is, that they obeyed not his voice. He hence concludes that they were deaf; for their life ought to have testified that they had heard the voice of God speaking to them.

He then adds, And they have walked after the hardiness, or obstinacy, or imaginations, of their own heart [246] He opposes the imaginations, or hardness of the heart, to the voice of God, as we find in other places, where contrary things are stilted, that is, what men's minds devise, and what God shews by his word to be right; for there is no less contrariety between the rule of right living and the imaginations of men, than there is between fire and water. Let us therefore know, that our life cannot be rightly formed except we renounce our own imaginations, and simply obey the voice of God: for as soon as we yield the least to our own imaginations, we necessarily

[245] "Voice" is for God's word; and so the Targum renders it: they did not walk in, or according to, his word — Ed.
[246] See Note on Jeremiah 3:17, 18.

turn aside from the right way, which God has made known to us in his word. This contrast, then, between the law of God and the imaginations or the obduracy of men ought to be carefully noticed.

He then more clearly explains how they had sinned, and after Baalim [247] The Prophet here adds nothing new; but by specifying one thing he shews how the Jews followed their own imaginations, by giving themselves up to profane superstitions. What indeed must happen to men, when they forsake God, and allow themselves to follow their own thoughts? what but error and superstition, yea, the abyss of all errors? In short, the Prophet in this clause intended to cut off every occasion for subterfuges; for the Jews, like hypocrites, who sophistically deal with God, might have made this evasion, and said, ``Why dost thou object to us our imaginations? what are these imaginations?'' Baalim, he says, ``Ye have devised idols far yourselves in addition to the only true God; it is hence quite evident, that having forsaken God's word, ye have followed your own imaginations.'' He adds to Baalim, as their fathers have taught them: the relative {אשר}, asher, is to be taken for {כ} caph, as. [248] I shall speak of this clause tomorrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast not only testified what is right by the Law and the Prophets, in order that we may form our life in obedience to thy will, but hast also made more fully known to us by thy Gospel what is perfect righteousness, --- O grant, that being ruled by thy Spirit, we may surrender ourselves altogether to thee, and so acquiesce in thy Word alone, that we may not deviate either to the right hand or to the left, but allow thee alone to be wise, and that acknowledging our folly and vanity, we may suffer ourselves to be taught by thy Word, so that we may really prove that we are truly obedient to thee, until having at length completed the course of this life, we shall reach that heavenly rest which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirty-Seventh

We explained yesterday what the Prophet said respecting the Jews, that though no one considered the reason why God so severely afflicted them, yet they could not escape in this way, and that they in vain set up the shield of iglnorance, for God had often declared that he abominated their superstitions. Though then they were all blind, and no prophet shewed to them the cause of their evils, yet Jeremiah said, that this alone was sufficient --- that God had spoken, and would again speak to them. He said that they were not submissive to God's authority, but walked after the hardness of their own heart, and after Baalim. He added, that they had been thus taught by their fathers By this clause he exaggerated their sin; for they did not

[247] It is supposed that the Israelites made a difference between this word and God: they allowed but one God, but introduced Baalim, or inferior gods, and worshipped them. They tried to evade the charge of idolatry, by alleging that Baalim were mediators. But no excuse of this kind was admitted, as God everywhere imputed idolatry to them. Notwithstanding this example, and the distinct declaration of Scripture, that there is but one God and one Mediator, (1 Corinthians 8:5, 6; 1 Timothy 2:5,) the error, the awful error of praying to saints, etc., as mediators, has prevailed in the Christian Church! — Ed.

[248] It makes no difference as to the meaning, but the true construction of this clause is as follows, — Which their fathers have taught them. The verb “to teach,” in Hebrew as well as in some other languages, admits of two objective cases. — Ed.

then begin for the first time to sin, but became obstinate in their vices.

We may learn from this passage how foolishly the Papists now glory in imitating the fathers: for they think that examples stand for laws; nay, they hesitate not to oppose. God's authority by what has been done by men. But we see that such an excuse is not only frivolous, but that thereby the crime is doubled; for more excusable is the ignorance of one year, or of a short time, than when there is a long obstinate persistency in it, and when children, after having embraced abominations, received from their fathers, hand them down to their posterity.

He at length concludes that God would take vengeance, but speaks in a figurativle language, I will feed them with bitterness The word {לענה} lone, is rendered ``wormwood;'' but as this is a wholesome herb, I prefer to render it ``bitterness.'' [249] It is never found in a good sense, and therefore unsuitable to the nature of wormwood, which is often mentioned by Moses: and the other prophets (Deuteronomy 19:18; Deuteronomy 32:32; Hebrews 2:15.) Hence I am inclined to adopt a general term, ``bitterness.'' He then adds, I will give them poisonous waters to drink; [250] as though God had said that he would execute a dreadful vengeance, so that it would appear in the meat and drink given them, which yet were remarkable testimonies of his paternal kindness towards them: for we cannot eat a crumb of bread nor drink a drop of water, except God's goodness, and the care which he takes for our safety, shines upon us. Hence is that awful imprecation in Psalm 69:22, 23,

``Turned let their table be into an offense.''

David also complained, when describing the barbarous cruelty of his enemies, that they gave him gall to drink: and we shall hereafter see what Jeremiah says; for in speaking. of his enemies, he says that they had conspired to put him to death, and said,

``Let us set wood for his bread.'' (Jeremiah 11:19)

By these words then Jeremiah intended to express the dreadful vengeance of God; for he would not onty deprive the Jews of his benefits, but also turn their bread into poison, and their water into bitterness.

We now then perceive the Prophet's meaning; and at the same time we must observe the expression, the God of Israel The foolish boasting, that they were the descendants of Abraham, and that they were a holy people, chosen by God, always deluded the Jews. In order then to check their glorying, the Prophet says, float the God who spoke to them was the God whose name they falsely professed, and that he was the God who had chosen the children of Abraham as his peculiar people. It follows ---

Jeremiah 9:16

16. I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them.

16. Et dispergam eos inter gentes, quas non noverunt ipsi, neque patres eorum, et mittam post eos gladium, donec consumpsero ipsos.

[249] But the reason why this herb is mentioned is its bitterness, — and not its wholesome effects. It was hence chosen to designate what is afflictive and distressing. This appears from. Proverbs 5:4, “bitter as wormwood.” — Ed.

[250] See note on Jeremiah 8:14.

As he had said that the Jews were following what theyhad received from their fathers, so he says now that God would scatter them among nations,which had been unknown to them and to their fathers. He then alludes to their mischievous tradition; for the fathers had imbued their children with ungodly errors, and had withdrawn them from God, that their doctrine might become altogether familiar to them. There is then a contrast to be noticed between the knowledge with which the fathers had inebriated their children, and their ignorance of the language of the nations.

And then as he had said, that they were walking after the hardness of their own heart and after Baalim, he says, I will send a sword after them We hence see that the Prophet in both clauses alludes to the defection of which he had spoken. And he adds, Until I shall have consumed them; and this is added, that they might not promise themselves a temporary or a moderate chastisement. Jeremiah then declares, that as they had abused God's forbearance, destruction was nigh them, and that God would contimle to consume them, until he had wholly destroyed them. It follows ---

Jeremiah 9:17-18

17. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come:

17. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Attendite et votate lamentatrices, ut veniant, et ad peritas mittite ut veniant:

18. And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters.

18. Et festinent et tollant super nos luctum, et descendant oculi nostri in lachrymas, (alii vertunt, descendant cum lachrymis, vel, emittant lachrymas,) et palpebrae nostrae defluant in aquas.

In this passage, as in many others, the Prophet endeavors by a striking representation really to touch the hearts of his people, for he saw that they were extremely refractory, insensible, and secure. Since then the threatenings of God were either wholly despised, or had not sufficiently moved the hearts of the people, it was necessary to set forth God's judgments as present. Therefore the Prophet gives a striking description of what takes place in times of mourning. At the same time he seems to condemn indirectly the Jews for not knowing, through God's word, that there was a calamity at hand: for God's word ought indeed to be like a mirror, by which men ought to see God's goodness in his promises and also his judgment in his threatenings. As then all prophecies were deemed as fables by the people, it was not without some degree of derision that he addressed them in this manner, ---

Hearken ye, and call for mourners, that they may come An absurd and a foolish custom has prevailed almost in all ages to hire women as mourners, whom they called proeficoe; they were employed to mourn for others. Heirs no doubt hired these foolish women, in order to shew their reigned piety; they spoke in praise of the dead, and shewed how great a loss was their death. The Prophet does not commend this custom; and we ought to know that Scripture often takes similes from the vices of men, as from filth and dirt. If then any one concludes from these winds of Jeremiah, that lamentations at funerals are not to be condemned, this would be foolish and puerile. The Prophet, on the contrary, does here reprove the Jews, because they

heedlessly disregarded all God's threatenings, and were at the same time soft and tender at those foolish exhibitions, and all mourned at the sight of those women who were hired to lament; as the case is at this time, when a faithful teacher reprobates the prevailing folly of the Papists. For when the unprincipled men, who occupy the pulpits under the Papacy, speak with weeping, though they produce not a syllable from God's word, but add some spectacle or phantom, by producing the image of the Cross or some like thing, they touch the feelings of the vulgar and cause weeping, according to what actors do on the stage. As then the Papists are seized as it were with an insane feeling, when their deceivers thus gesticulate, so a faithful teacher may say to them, ``Let any one come and set before your eyes the image of a dead man, or say, that you must all shortly die and be like the earcase shewn to you, and ye will cry and weep; and yet ye will sot consider how dreadful God's judgment is, which I declare to you: I shew to you faithfully from the law, from the prophets, and from the Gospel; how dreadful is God's vengeance, and set before you what ye deserve; yet none of you are moved; but my doctrine is a mockery to you, and also my reproofs and threatenings: go then to your prophets, who shew you pictures and the like trumperies.'' So the Prophet says now, ``I see that I can do you no good; the Lord will therefore give you no teachers but women.'' Of what sort? Even such, he says, as lament, or are hired to mourn.

We now then perceive why the Prophet speaks of hired women. Attend ye, he says; and why? They ought indeed to have been attentive to or to understand (for {בו} ben, means properly to understand, and in Hithpael it signifies to consider) his words; but as he saw that he was ridiculed or despised, and that all the threatenings which proceeded from God were esteemed as fables, he now says, ``Consider ye and call for your lamenters:* --- as I see such perverseness in you, be taught at least by those women who are commonly invited to lament, and who sell their tears!'' Send,* he says, for the skilfu1, that they may come By these words he intended more clearly to express, that the calamity which the people feared not was not far distant.

Let them, he says, take up for us a wailing, and let our eyes come down to tears, and let our eyelids flow down into waters These are hyperbolical words, and yet they do not exceed the intensehess of the coming vengeance: for it was not in vain that he said at the begSnning of the chapter, ``Who will make my head waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears?'' As then the greatness of the calamity could be expressed by no words, the Prophet was constrained to adopt these hyperbolical expressions: Let them then take up for us a wailing, that our eyes may come down to tears: and this he said, because he saw that he was heard with dry eyes, and that the people disregarded what had been denounced:, when yet all ought to have been smitten with fear, from the least to the greatest. As then the Prophet saw that their contempt was so brutal, he says, that when lainenters came, there would then be the time for wailing, not indeed the seasonable time; but it is the same as though he had said, that the Jews would then find out how insensible they had been, in not having in due

time considered the judgment of God. [251] It follows ---

Jeremiah 9:19

19. For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we spoiled! we are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out.

19. Quia vox luctus audita est ex Sion, Quomodo perditi (aut, vastati) sumus? pudefacti valde? quia dereliquimus terram, quia projecerunt habitacula nostra (quidam subaudirent, projecerunt nos.)

We have said before, that when Jeremiah addressed the people in these words, they were still in a tolerably good condition, so that the king had confidence in his own resources; and his counsellors also thought that some aid would come to them from Egypt, and the people were likewise deceived. But the Prophet speaks of future events and points out as by the finger the evils which were as yet concealed from the view; for he could not otherwise teach with any authority, as he had to do with men of iron hearts. As then he saw that his teaching had no effect, and was wholly disregarded by men so slothful, he felt it necessary to form his style so as to touch their feelings.

On this account he says, that a voice was heard, a voice of wailing from Sion; where yet all exulted with joy. Then he adds, How have we been destroyed! and made greatly ashamed! The Jews thought this a fable, until they found by experience that they had been extremely hard and obstinate: but this really happened. Though they were then indulging in their pleasures, he yet proclaims lamentations to them, as though they were already destroyed: A voice, he says, has been heard, as though the Jews were bewailing the calamity, respecting which they thought the Prophet was fabling, for no danger was yet apparent.

But in order, as I have said, to condemn the hardness of their hearts, he represents them in another character, as bewailing their ruinous condition, and saying, We have left the land; in which however they thought their dwelling would be perpetual; for they boasted that they could never be excluded, as it had been declared,

``This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have chosen it.''

(Psalm 132:14.)

As then God had testified that it would be a quiet habitation to his people, they thought that they were fortified by a triple wall and rampart, and that the city was altogether unassailable. But Jeremiah represents them as saying, that they had left their own land, that is, that they had been drawn and driven into exile. Then he adds, because they have cast us out This seems to refer to their enemies who had cast them out, that is, pulled down their dwellings. Some take dwellings to be the nominative case to the verb, ``Our dwellings have cast us out.'' [252] But the first

[251] I render the verses thus, — 17. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, bethink yourselves; And call for mourning women, that they may come; Yea, for the skillful send, that they may come, 18. And hasten, and raise for us a wailing, That our eyes may pour forth tears, And our eyelids drop down waters. — Ed.

[252] The true version is that given by Blaney and approved by Horsley, — Because they have thrown down our habitations. The ancient versions differ, but none give the meaning of our version, which is that of Junius and Tremelius. The whole verse is in the past tense: things are represented as having already taken place: — For the voice of wailing has been heard from Sion, – “How have we been plundered! We have been put to great shame; For we have left the

meaning reads better: I therefore consider the sense to be simply this, --- that they were cast out and that their houses were destroyed by their enemies. It follows ---

Jeremiah 9:20-21

20. Yet hear the word of the LORD, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation.

20. Itaque audite mulieres sermonem Jehovae, et percipiant aures vestrae sermonem oris ejus, et docete filias vestras luctum, et unaquaeque (mulier, ad verbum) sociam (vel, propinquam) suam planctum:

21. For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets.

21. Quia ascendit mors in fenestras nostras, intravit in palatia nostra ad excidendum infantem e platea (e via publica) electos (hoc est adolescentes, etiam in flore oetatis et vigore) in compitis.

He proceeds with the same subject, but adopts another figure. He then somewhat changes the comparison; for he had bidden them before to hire women to excite to mourning by fictitious tears, but he now addresses women in general; as though he had said, that such would be the mourning, that hired lamentations would not be sufficient, for the calamity would touch all hearts, and that mercenary wailing would not be real. Hear, he says, ye women

Why he addresses women may be accounted for in two ways: the softness of women more easily leads them to weep; there may be also here an indirect condemnation of the men, that they were deaf and so hardened that no threatenings terrified them. But the first seems to be the most suitable reason here, provided we still understand that real mourning is opposed to reigned mourning. Then Jeremiah passes from the particular to the general; that is, after having spoken of hired women, he now includes all women; for lamentation would prevail in every city, and also in every house: Hear then, ye women, the word of Jehovah

And he adds, and let your ears receive the word of his mouth He mentions on the one hand the mouth of God, and on the other the ears of women. It seems indeed a redundancy, but the repetition is not superfluous. Had he said only, ``Let your ears hear the word of his mouth,'' there would have been a redundancy; but he spoke before only of the word of God, and hear ye; now he adds, the mouth of God, and the ears of women. The Prophet no doubt intended to rebuke that hardness which we have often noticed. The word of God was deemed of no moment; hence he says, the mouth of God: as though he had said, ``God speaks with you as it were from mouth to mouth: for though he employs my labor, I am yet but his instrument; so that you may easily find out that I declare nothing presumptuously, but faithfully deliver what I have received from him.'' We hence see how emphatical is this repetition, which may seem at first sight to be superfluous. The same emphasis belongs to the ears of women; it is as though he had said, that they had been hitherto extremely indifferent, and that it was time for their ears to be attentive.

land, For they have thrown down our habitations." The people are set forth as assembled in Jerusalem, having been made to quit the land, their dwellings having been pulled down. — Ed.

He adds, And teach your daughters; as though he had said, that such would be the wailing, that it would reach not only the old and the middle-aged, but even young girls, as yet rude and ignorant. And let every one, he says, teach her neighbor lamentation In short, the meaning is, that no women, old or young, would be exempt from this mourning, as all would be implicated in a common sorrow; for God's judgment would reach every age, sex, and order of men, and would also penetrate into every house.

And by way of explanation he adds, For death has ascended into our windows There is here a kind of derision; for the Jews, as it has been said, had falsely promised to themselves a perpetual impunity; and therefore the Prophet adopts here a most suitable comparison. For as they sleep securely, who with closed doors seem to themselves to be beyond the reach of danger; so the Jews at that time despised God and all his judgments, as though the doors of their houses were closed. Hence the Prophet says, that death had entered in through the windows; and he thus derides their folly for thinking that they could escape the hand of God, because their gates were shut, as though. God's power could not ascend above the clouds nor enter through their windows, when the doors were closed. In short, he intimates that the doors would not be opened by God; for though he might not be disposed to break them, he could yet immediately ascend into the windows. We now apprehend the Prophet's design in saying, that death had entered through the windows.

And what he adds respecting palaces bears the same import; as though he had said, ``Were our houses even fortified, and were they not. only commodious habitations, but made like citadels, yet God could not be excluded; for his power can penetrate through the highest and the thickest walls, so that a palace is to him like the weakest and frailest cottage.'' We hence see that by this comparison he checks that foolisll confidence by which the Jews had deceived themselves, and by which they were as yet inebriated. Death then has ascended into our windows, etc.

He then adds, To cut off the young, or children, from the public ways, and the youths from the streets [253] By these words he sets forth the dreadfulness of the calamity; for the youths would not be able to defend themselves by their own strength; for by {בחורים}, bechurim, he means the most robust. Even these would not be able to repel the onset of their enemies; though in the flower of their age, yet their rigor, however strong, would not protect them, nor would children and infants be spared. We see that two things are here set forth by the Prophet, --- that the assaults of their enemies would be so violent, that young men would in vain resist

[253] The objection, that there is an inconsisteney in saying that death entered through the windows to cut off children from the street, disappears, when we consider that the Jews thought themselves safe because their gates were closed and their city fortified. Be it so, says the Prophet, yet death will enter, if not through the gates, yet through the windows, and through our towers, and it will destroy the children who play in our streets, and our young men assembled in the squares and the wide places of our city. That those collected at Jerusalem are here meant, is evident from the nineteenth verse. Then, in the next verse, he refers to those who still continued in the country. And this accounts for the change made in the sentence, which has puzzled some expounders, and induced them to propose emendations. The verse may be thus rendered, — For climbed has death through our windows, It has come through our towers, To cut off the child from the street, The young men from the broad streets. Though the gates were closed, yet death came in, not only through windows, or any openings there might have been, but also through strong towers. — Ed.

them, as their vigor would avail them nothing, --- and then that such would be the cruelty of their enemies, that no regard would be shewn for age, for they would put to death even infants newly born. It follows ---

Jeremiah 9:22

22. Speak, Thus saith the LORD, Even the carcases of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvestman, and none shall gather them.

22. Loquere, Sic dicit Jehova, Cadet cadaver hominis, tanquam stercus in superficie agri, et tanquam manipulus a tergo messoris, et nemo colligens.

Though Jeremiah continues the same subject, he yet introduces a preface, --- that he had been commanded to declare what he says here; for on account of the strangeness of the event, the prophecy seemed incredible. He might, indeed, have proceeded with the subject, and omitted the words, ``Thus saith Jehovah,'' and have begun thus: ``Fall shall the carcase of man,'' etc. But, as I have said, this prophecy seemed to the greatest part as worthless, as though it was a fable: it was therefore necessary to introduce these words, --- that he came forth furnished with God's command; and he at the same time shews that he introduced nothing of his own, but that God himself spoke. We now perceive why these few words were introduced. [254]

He afterwards says, that the carcases of men would be cast forth as dung He speaks by way of reproach, as though he had said, that all would without honor be laid prostrate by their enemies. And he adds a similitude, They shall fall, he says, on the face of the field, that is, everywhere through all the fields shall they fall as dung, which is cast forth, and which excites nausea by its sight and by its odor. Thus the Prophet here denotes foetor and a deformed sight by the comparison of dung: yet we know with what pride were they then filled. This threatening then was to them very disagreeable; but as they flattered themselves in their vices, it was the more necessary to treat them roughly; for thus ought hypocrites to be dealt with, who indulge their own delusions: the more boldly they rise up against God, the more violently ought they to be east down, so that they may at length humble themselves under the mighty hand of God.

He adds another comparison, As a handful, etc. Jerome renders it ``hay.'' If {עמיד} omid, were found elsewhere in this sense, I would willingly adopt this meaning; but I rather think that it means those ears of corn which are not gathered while the reapers collect their handfuls. They do not, indeed, leave complete handfuls, nor east them away; but it happens, through carelessness, that a few ears escape them. Then the Prophet says, that the Jews would be like those ears of corn which the reapers pass by and leave behind; and there is no one afterwards to gather them: and those ears of corn which thus remain in the field either rot of themselves, or are devoured by cattle or wild beasts. He then means, that there would be no residue of the people, for all, from the least to the greatest, would be given up to destruction.

[254] Blayney and some others connect {{דבר with the former verse, and, on the authority of the Septuagint, leave out ``thus saith Jehovah.'' The Vulgate and the Targum retain the text as we have it, and the Syriac omits only the first word; and there is no MS. in favor of what has been proposed; and the meaning, as here represented by Calvin, is so evident, that no change is at all necessary, --- 22. Speak, Thus saith Jehovah, Fall also shall the carcase of man, Like dung on the face of the field, Or like an handful of corn after the reaper, And without any to gather it. This would be the fate of such as remained in the country, whilst the greatest part had fled into Jerusalem. It is by keeping this distinction in view that the whole passage, from verse the seventeenth, may be rightly understood. --- Ed.

This is the meaning; and at the same time he expresses contempt; for when reapers do not collect the whole produce of the field, there are still the poor, who gather the ears of corn; but when they are trodden under foot, and when there is no one to gather them, it betokens contempt; and this is what the Prophet intended to express. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 9:23-24

23. Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches:

23. Sic dicit Jehova, Ne glorietur sapiens in sapientia sua, et ne glorietur fortis in fortitudine sua; ne glorietur dives in divitiis suis:

24: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

24. Sed in hoc glorietur qui gloriatur cognoscendo et sciendo me, quod ego sum Jehova, faciens misericordiam, (vel, clementiam) judicium et justitiam in terra; quia in his complacuit mihi, dicit Jehova.

This is a remarkable passage, and often found in the mouth of men, as other notable sentences, which are known as proverbial sayings: but yet few rightly consider how these words are connected with the previous context. Hence there are many who are satisfied with a simple explanation, as though it were a subject abruptly introduced, and as though the Prophet commenced something new; and they confine themselves to those words: and thus they misrepresent the meaning of the Prophet, or at least diminish much of the force of what is taught.

The Prophet no doubt has a regard to what has gone before. He saw, as I have often said, that he addressed the deaf; for the Jews were so swollen with false confidence, that the word of God was regarded worthless by them. As then some were proud for their riches, and others thought themselves more prudent than that they could by any means be taken, and others thought themselves so fortified by wealth and power, that they could easily resist any evil, --- as then the minds of all were possessed with so much pride, the Prophet, in order to confirm what he had said, declares here that men foolishly gloried, while they set up their riches, or their strength, or their wisdom, in opposition to God; for all these things would vanish away like smoke.

We now then perceive why the Prophet forbids here any to glory except in God alone, and how the passage ought not to be deemed as abrupt, but connected with what he said, when he denounced destruction on the Jews, which yet they dreaded not, because they were filled with this ungodly and foolish conceit, --- that they had more than a sufficient protection in their own strength, or riches, or wisdom. The rest to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou settest before our eyes so many evils and vices by which we have provoked thine anger against us, and yet givest us the hope of pardon if we repent, --- O grant us a teachable spirit, that we may with becoming meekness attend to thy threatenings, and be in such a way territlcd by them as not

yet to despair of the mercy offered to us, but seek it through thy Son: and as he has once for all pacified thee by shedding his blood, so cleanse thou us also by thy Spirit from all our pollutions, until we at length stand immaculate before thee in that day when Christ shall appear for the salvation of all his people. --- Amen.

Lecture Thirty-Eighth

We began yesterday to explain what the Prophet means, when he forbids men to glory either in wisdom, or in strength, or in riches. The meaning is, that all are greatly deceived who think themselves blessed while alienated from God. We have also noticed the reason why he speaks of wisdom, strength, and riches, even this, --- because it is a vice innate in all mortals to be proud of their own excellency. Whatever we think valuable ought to be acknowledged as received from God. If then all the excellency we have is God's gift, it is very strange that we do not learn humility when God thus binds us to himself; but that, on the contrary, we abuse his bounty by making it the occasion of pride. This ingratitude has nevertheless ever prevailed in the world. This then is the reason why the Prophet here reduces to nothing all the boastings of the world. There were among the Jews some rich, others excelled in wisdom, and others in power: thus it happened, that heavenly truth was of no value in their esteem. As then some trusted in their riches and not. in God, and others in their wisdom, and others in their valor, the Prophet here declares that all the glory they arrogated on account of God's temporal gifts, was all nothing. It remained then for the Jews to consider, that all such confidences would avail nothing against God's judgment.

But we may hence learn a general truth; and Paul no doubt had a regard to this passage in 1 Corinthians 1:31. He teaches us there, that God chooses what is foolish in the world, that he might thus shame the wisdom of the world, and that he chooses what is weak, that he might upset the strength of the world; and then he adds, That whosoever glories must glory in God alone. He doubtless took this passage from the Prophet; and yet he does not only speak there of strength of body, nor of riches, nor of worldly wisdom; but includes also righteousness, and whatever is deemed valuable or honorable among men. His object, then is to annihilate every glory that belongs to the flesh, that the mercy of God alone may shine forth. Hence I said, that though the Prophet mentions only three things, yet a generaal doctrine may hence be suitably drawn; for what is said of wisdom, strength, and riches, may and ought to be applied to that false conceit of righteousness with which hypocrites swell. We shall now consider the words.

Thus saith Jehovah, Let not the wise glory, etc [255] By way of concession he calls those wise who were without the fear of God, which yet we know is the beginning of wisdom. (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7.) But the Prophet speaks according to the common opinion; and the meaning may be thus given, ``Let; not him who seenas wise to himself glory in his own wisdom:'' and so the other words may be under-

[255] The next sentence is, “the valiant in his valor:” so the Vulate; but by the Septuagint “the strong ({ἰσχυρὸς}) in his strength;'' by the Syriac, ``the giant in his strength.'' The Targum gives this paraphrase of the verse, ``Thus saith the Lord, Let not Solomon, the wise son of David, delight in his wisdom; nor Sampson, the valiant son of Manoah, delight in his valor; nor Ahab, the rich son of Omri, delight in his riches.'' It is military valor that is probably meant. They thought that they had wisdom in counsel, valor in defense, and wealth to procure aid, or to carry on war. --- Ed

stood. It is then added, But let him who glories, glory in this, etc. It appears from the second verse, that men are not so stripped of all glory, that they may be down in disgrace; but that they may seek a better glory, for God detights not in the degradation of men. But as they arrogate to themselves more than what is right, and even inebriate themselves with delusions, he strips them naked, that after having known that all they think they have, either from nature, or from themselves, or from other creatures, is a mere phantom, they may seek true glory.

He afterwards adds, In understanding and knowing me Though by these two word the Prophet means the same thing, yet they are not used without a design; for as men despised the knowledge of God, it was necessary to remind them, that to know God is the chief part of perfect wisdom. He therefore intended to correct the mischievous error under which almost the whole world labors; for while all attend to wxrious pursuits, the knowledge of God is neglected. We see with what ardor every one pursues his own fancies, while hardly one in a hundred deigns to spend half an hour in the day in seeking the knowledge of God. And there is also another evil, a false opinion, which proceeds from pride, --- that to know God is a common thing. We hence perceive why the Prophet has employed these two words to designate the same thing; it was to rouse more fully the attention of men; for he saw that almost all were torpid and indifferent on a subject which is justly entitled to the labor of a whole life; nay, were a hundred lives given us, this one thing would be sufficient to engage our attention. But, as it has been said, what ought to be preferred to all other things is despised and neglected.

He afterwards adds, That I am Jehovah, who doeth judgment. By calling himself Jehovah, he doubtless excludes all those devices which then engaged the attention of the Jews; for the whole land was corrupted by so many superstitions, that the name of the only true God was unknown. They all, indeed, professed to worship the God of Abraham, who had delivered to them his law by the hand of Moses; but as many errors were mingled with the true doctrine, God was deprived of his own honor. It was, then, God's will that he should be so known as to appear alone supreme, and to be alone as it were kept in view. But the explanation which follows ought to be carefully observed; for had he said only, ``Let every one who glories, glory in the knowledge of me, that I am Jehovah,'' it would, indeed, have been a plain truth, but not sufficiently persplcuous or evident; for the minds of men might have been in suspense, and they might have said, ``What does this mean? or, why is it, that God regards the knowledge of himself to be so important? They might also have supposed that it was quite enough to confess him to be the only true God. Hence God here reminds the Jews of his own divine perfections, that they might really know that he is God, and that they might not ascribe to him an empty name. It was for this reason that I have said, that these words, who doeth mercy and judgement and justice, ought to be carefully observed.

We see at this day, under the Papacy, that the name of God is presumptuously gloried in: there is no one who is not ready boldly to declare that he worships the one true God, and yet they profane his name; for they afterwards rob God, and bestow the spoils on the dead. This passage then teaches us, that the name of God of itself

would be of no importance, if stripped of his power and perfections. Hence we have then only the true knowledge of God, when we not only acknowledge him to be the creator of the world, but when we also fully believe that the world is governed by him, and when we further understand the way in which he governs it, that is, by doing mercy and judgment and justice

Now, the first thing respecting God is, that we should acknowledge him to be beneficient and bountiful; for what would become of us without the mercy of God? Therefore the true and right knowledge of God begins here, that is, when we know him to be merciful towards us. For what would it avail us to know that God is just, except we had a previous knowledge of his mercy and gratuitous goodness? We cannot know God without knowing ourselves. These two things are connected. Now, if any examines himself, what will he find but what will make him to despair? Thus, whenever God is thought of, we feel a dread, and despair in a manner swallows us up. In short, all avoid God, except the sweetness of his grace allures them. Why? Because, as I have said, there is nothing but what brings misery to us, and a cause of dread. Hence Jeremiah, while bidding men to glory in the knowledge of God, has not in vain given the first and the highest place to his mercy.

He afterwards adds, Judgement and justice When these two words are joined together, they denote perfect government; that is, that God defends his faithful people, aids the miserable, and delivers them when unjustly oppressed; and also that he restrains the wicked, and suffers them not to injure the innocent at their pleasure. These then are the things which the Scripture everywhere means by the two words, judgment and justice. The justice of God is not to be taken according to what is commonly understood by it; and they speak incorrectly who represent God's justice as in opposition to his mercy: hence the common proverb, ``I appeal from justice to mercy.'' The Scripture speaks otherwise; for justice is to be taken for that faithful protection of God, by which he defends and preserves his own people; and judgment, for the rigor which he exercises against the transgressors of his law.

But, as I have already said, judgment and justice, when found together, are to be taken for that legitimate government, by which God so regulates the affairs of the world, that there is nothing but what is just and right: and hence is confirmed more fully what I have already stated, that he not only speaks generally, but intends also to remove the evils which then stood in the way, and prevented the Jews from rightly receiving either promises or threatenings; for a false glory inebriated them all, inasmuch as one thought his riches to be like an invincible fortress; another, his wisdom; and the third, his strength. As then they were full of vain pride, and thus despised God and his heavenly truth, it was necessary to bring them to order, and even wholly to strip them, that they might know that they were not to glory in anything but in the knowledge of God.

Now, the knowledge mentioned here produces two fruits, even faith and fear; for if we are fully, persuaded that there is propitiation with God, as it is said in Psalm 130:4 we recumb on him, and hesitate not to flee to him, and to place our salvation in his hand. This is one thing. Then faith brings fear, as it is said in the psalm referred to,

``There is propitiation with thee, that thou mayest be feared.''

But the Prophet here distinctly refers to these two things; for God, by expressing his will to be known as being merciful, doubtless encourages us to exercise faith, so that we may call on him witlx tranquil minds, and not doubt but he is propitious to us; for he looks not on what we are, in order to repay to us wlmt we deserve, but deals graciously with us according to his mercy: and by saying that he doeth judgment and justice, he intimates, that these two things ought to dispose and turn our hearts to fear and reverence. At the same time, when God declares that he doeth justice, He supplies us with a reason for confidence; for he thus promises to be the guardian of our salvation: for, as I have said, his justice is not to render to every one his just reward, but is to be extended further, and is to be taken for his faithfulness. As then God never forsakes his own people, but aids them in due time, and restrains the wicked, he is on this account called just: we hence can then more securely, and with quieter minds, recumb on him, when we know that his justice is such, that he will never leave us destitute of help whenever necessary.

He afterwards adds, For in these I delight, saith Jehovah This refers to men; as though God had said, that he hated all who pass by the knowledge of his mercy, judgment, and justice, and become ferocious and elated with a vain hope on account of riches, or of strength, or of wisdom, according to what is said in Psalm 147:10,

``The strength of a horse pleases not God, nor is he delighted with the legs of a man;''

as though he had said, that God hates that confidence by which men presumptuously extol themselves, while they think their life and their safety to be in their own hand. So also, in this passage, there is a contrast to be understood between the knowledge of God's mercy, judgment, and justice, and the wisdom, strength, riches, and the foolish glorying, by which men are inflated, when they seek in these their happiness. [256]

We now also more clearly see what I have before said, --- that not only condemned in these words is the boasting of human power, and the glowing in wisdom and in wealth, but that men are wholly stripped of all the confidence they place in themselves, or seek from the world, in order that the knowledge of God alone may be deemed enough for obtaining perfect happiness. For the Prophet shews, with suffi-

[256] Blayney and Venema agree with Calvin in thinking that "these" refer to such men as knew God and trusted in him, and not to "these" things, the mercy, judgment, and justice before mentioned. The versions and the Targum are ambiguous, like the Hebrew, except the Vulgate, in which "these" is in the neuter gender, referring to things, and not to men. I would render the verse thus, — But in this let him glory who glories, That he understands, and that he knows me, — That I am Jehovah, Who doeth mercy, judgment, and justice in the land; For in these have I delighted, saith Jehovah. "Me" is left out in the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Arabic. "That he knows me" is only a more clear enunciation of the previous words, "that he understands:" what he understands or knows is then stated, "That I am," etc. "Judgment," when connected with justice, seems to refer to what the law forbids; and "justice," to what the law enjoins. See Isaiah 56:1, where the command is, to "keep" or observe "judgment," and to "do" or execute "justice." God doeth judgment in that he doeth nothing wrong, contrary to what is right and just; and he doeth justice in the defence of what is right and just, and in making good what he hath promised. Judgment regards the negative part of the law, and justice the active part. In Jeremiah 22:3, we find both words, "judgment and justice," or righteousness. Then, as it is usual with the prophets, the last is described first, "delivered is the spoiled:" afterwards judgment is set forth, it does "no wrong," etc. But it is only when the two words occur together that they have these specific meanings; for both, occurring separately, have a much wider import. They are used together more than twenty times. — Ed.

cient clearness, that all men without God are miserable: it hence follows, that they are not otherwise happy but in him. Then the way and manner is to be added. How are we made happy in God? Even by knowing his mercy towards us, and then by delivering up ourselves to his defense and protection, and by suffering ourselves to be ruled by him, and by obeying also his law, because we fear his judgment. This passage might indeed be more fully handled; but it is enough for me, according to my custom, to point out the main things. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 9:25-26

25. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised;

25. Ecce dies veniunt, dicit Jehova, ut visitem (ad verbum, et visitabo) super omnem circumcisum in praeputio.

26. Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.

26. Super Egyptium (vel, super Egyptum; tam de terra quam de hominibus potest accipi) et super Jehudah, et super Edom, et super omnes filios Amon, et super Moab, et super omnes finitos in angulo (alii vertunt, attonsos comam, sed nulla ratio apparet) habitantes in deserto; quia omnes gentes incircumcisae (vel, praeputiatae) et tota domus Israel praeputiati sunt corde (vel, incircumcisi.)

The Prophet, after having removed the obstacle which he saw hindered the Jews from reverently receiving the truth of God, now speaks more sharply, and performs the office of a herald in denouncing the vengeance which was at hand: Behold, he says, come shall the days, in which I will visit all the uncircumcised in uncircumcision

This passage admits of two meanings. Some interpreters take as distinct these two words, {מול} mul, the circumcised, {בערלה}, beorle, in uncircumcision; as though Jeremiah had said, ``I will visit the Jews, who are circumcised, as well as the heathen nations, who are uncircumcised,'' Others read them jointly, --- that God threatens vengeance on the Jews and Gentiles, because they were circumcised, and still retained uncircumcision. The passage may however be thus suitably explained, --- that there was a mixture, which corrupted the sacredness of circumcision, and made it like the uncircumcision of the Gentiles; as though it were thus expressed, ``I will visit the circumcised with the uncircumcision,'' that is, promiscuously and without any difference, as we say in our language, Pele mele. For it follows afterwards, that all were uncircumcised in heart; that is, all the Jews. We hence see that the Prophet makes circumcision and uncireumcision the same, and that he intended to render profane the sacred symbol of adoption;but he had reference to the Jews, who, being degenerated, thus adulterated God's covenant, and at the same time violated circumcision, so that in differed nothing from uncircumcision. I therefore think, that the Jews are classed with the Gentiles, so that he ascribes even to them uncircumcision: I will then visit all the circumcised with the uncircumcision; that is, the circumcision of each is vain, and is like uncircumcision.

However this may be, the Prophet here denounces ruin, not only on the Jews, but also on the Egyptians and on other neighboring nations; but he yet speaks to his own

people, for his word was not destined for the Egyptians, nor for the Idumeans and the Moabites. But as the Jews were wont to have recourse to the Egyptians, when any danger arose from the Assyrians and Chaldeans, the Prophet here connects the Egyptians with the Jews, and for the same reason, the other nations. We indeed know that the Idumeans and the Moabites were most hostile enemies to the Jews; but as the state of things changed, they were at one time their enemies, at another their friends; and when they saw that the Chaldeans extended their power, they saw also that they were exposed to plunder, and hence it happened that they willingly helped the Jews. Since then the Hebrews hoped that their neighbors on every side would aid them, the Prophet says that a visitation was nigh them all: and hence is confirmed what I have already said; for he distinguishes not the Jews from the Egyptians and other nations; but, on the contrary, as they had made alliances with them, he intends to unite them in one body: I will visit, he says, the circumcised with the uncircumcision For the Jews did not bear in mind that God was the protector of their safety, and that they had been set apart by him from other nations. He names the circumcised together with the uncircumcision, because the Egyptians, the Idumeans, the Ammonites, and the Moabites, were deemed circumcised on account of the covenant they had made with the Jews; and the Jews were deemed uncircumcised, because they had forsaken God, and thus profarted themselves.

It is indeed true that the Idumeans were circumcised, for they were the descendants of Esau, and had no doubt retained this external symbol; but their circumcision was altogether a mockery, as Esau had departed from the Church of God. The circumcision of the elect people was in itself efficacious; but as they had alike fallen into superstitions, they were like the uncircumcised, according to what Paul says, --- that the letter of the circumcision, that is, the external rite, was nothing. We hence see that there is no common propriety in the Prophet's words, when he denounces vengeance on the Jews as well as on the Egyptians, and names the circumcised with the uneircumcision; for the latter had uncircumcision, the former circumcision, and thus they had blended profane and sacred things together, so that there was nothing pure or uncorrupted: and hence he mentions Egypt, Judah, Edom, the children of Ammon, and Moab We have before stated why he enumerated all these nations; he did so, because they expected help from one another, so that they all despised God.

He afterwards adds, And all the extreme ones in a corner The word {קף}, kots, means the end; hence they take {קצוצים}, kotsutsim, here for extremities: and {פאה} pae, signifies a corner, and an end. We might then, if propriety of language would bear it, render the words thus, ``the cornered in the corner.'' But the meaning is by no means ambiguous, which is, that though the Moabites and others had hidden recesses, they could not be exempt from the calamity. God's vengeance shall come, says Jeremiah, into their farthest corners, where they think that they dwell in safety. And what follows is explanatory, the inhabitants of the wilderness, or, those who dwell in the wilderness. He thus shews what he meant by {פאה} {קצוצי} kotsutsi pae, the extremities, of the corner. For when people inhabit remote places, they regard themselves on that account safer, being secure in their hiding --- places:

this confidence the Prophet derides; and he says that punishment would reach them also. [257]

He then adds, For all the nations are uncircumcised, and the whole house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart By saying, that all nations were uncircumcised, he doubtless includes the Israelites, and thus by way of reproach he takes away from the chosen people their peculiar distinction; as though he had said, that Israel was so mixed with the nations, that they only made a part of them: the Jews would have otherwise denied, that they deserved to be classed with the Gentiles; but the Prophet deprives them of every excuse, and says that they were but one nation, having no difference: All these nations then are uncircumcised And so {ה} He, before {גוים} guim, nations, may be taken as a demonstrative pronoun, and not a relative, ``All these nations.'' He had spoken not only of the Egyptians and the Idumeans and of other neighboring nations, but had also mentioned Judah. He then says, ``All these nations are uncircumcised:'' and as I have already said, he condemns Israel, because they differed nothing from the nations, though God had consecrated them to himself; for there was an entire mingling, which made them all equal.

But as some objection might still be alleged, he says, the Jews are uncircumcised in heart He had indeed already included them in the nations; but it was necessary to insist more on this point, for circumcision might have been pleaded by them. Hence the Prophet says, that though they had the visible symbol in the flesh, they were yet uncircumcised in heart, and ought therefore to be classed with the nations. We see how sharply he reproves them: though he separates them from other nations, he yet shews that they justly deserved to be numbered with them; for God cares not for the external symbol, but regards the chief thing, the circumcision of the heart.

It is a common thing with Moses and the Prophets to call an unrenewed heart, uncircumcision, and to say that the people are uncircumcised in heart: for circumcision, while an evidence of free salvation in Christ, at the same time initiated the Jews into the worship and service of God, and proved the necessity of a new life; it was in short a sign both of repentance and of faith. When, therefore, the Jews presented only the sign, they were justly derided by Moses and the prophets; for they seemed as though they sought to pacify God by a thing of nought, without regarding the end. The same is the case now when we boast of baptism alone, and are at the same time destitute of repentance and faith: our boasting is absurd and ridiculous. And hence Paul calls the external rite, when the sign is separated from its reality and

[257] The exposition of the phrase given in this section is inconsistent with all the ancient versions and the Targum: it is what has been given by modern rabbins. "The shaven around the face," is the Septuagint; "the shaven as to the hair," the Vulqate and the Targum; and to the same purpose is the Syriac and Arabic. The word {{פאה is used in Leviticus 19:27, with distinct reference to the side or corner of the head, and of the beard; and the Israelites were forbidden to imitate the nations who shaved off those parts. Parkhurst renders the phrase (which occurs also in Jeremiah 25:23, and in Jeremiah 49:32) ``trimmed on the sides,'' that is, of the head; more literally, ``the shaven on the side,'' that is, of the head, or, ``on the corner,'' that is, of the beard. It was a phrase, though defective, yet no doubt well understood, as it is the case in other languages. The design of mentioning these seems to have been to class together such as had been expressly separated. I propose the following as the version of the two verses, --- 25. Behold the days are coming, saith Jehovah, That I will visit every one circumcised, Who is in uncircumcision, --- 26. The Egyptians and Judah, Edom also and the children of Ammon and Moab, And all the shawn on the side of the head, Who dwell in the desert; For all these nations are uncircumcised; And all the house of Israel, --- They are uncircumcised in heart. It is justly remarked by Horsley that the nations here mentioned practiced circumcision. They were hence circumcised, and yet in uncircumcision; and the Jews were like them: and the last line explains this apparent contradiction: they had the outward but not the inward circumcision. --- Ed.

substance, the letter of the circumcision; and on the other hand he calls that the true circumcision, which is in secret and in the spirit. We may also say the same of baptism, --- that the literal baptism avails hypocrites nothing, for they receive only the naked sign: and therefore we must come to the spirit of baptism, to the thing itself; for the interior power is renovation, when our old man is crucified in us, and when we rise again with Christ into newness of life.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast revealed to us in thy Gospel how guilty and miserable we are, we may learn to loathe ourselves, ard so He down confounded and despairing on account of the sins and guilt we have contracted, as yet to know that true glory is offered to us, and that we can be made partakers of it, if by true faith we embrace thy only-begotten Son, in whom is offered to us perfect righteousness and salvation: And grant also that we may so cleave to Christ, and so receive by faith his blessings, that we may be able, not only before the world, but also against Satan and death itself, to glory in thee, that thou alone art just and wise and strong; and may thy strength and justice and wisdom shine forth upon us in our iniquity and ignorance and infirmity, until we shall at length reach that ruiness of glory, which has been prepared for us in heaven by Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Chapter 10

CHAPTER 10

Lecture Thirty-Ninth

Jeremiah 10:1-2

1. Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel:

1. Audite verbum quod loquitur (sermonem quem profert) Jehova ad vos, domus Israel:

2. Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.

2. Sic dicit Jehova, Viam gentium ne didiceritis, et a signis coelorum ne metuatis; quoniam metuunt ab illis gentes.

Jeremiah enters here on a new subject. Though he had, no doubt, taught this truth often, yet I consider it as distinct from what has gone before; for he begins here a new attack on those superstitions to which the Jews were then extremely addicted. He exhorts them first to hear the word of Jehovah; for they had so hardened themselves in the errors which they had derived from the Gentiles, and the contagion had so prevailed, that they could not be easily drawn away from them. This, then, is the reason why he used a sort of preface, and said, Hear ye the word of Jehovah, which he speaks to you, O house of Israel [258]

He then mentions the error in which the Chaldeans and the Egyptians were involved; for they were, we know, very attentive observers of the stars. And this is expressly stated, because the Jews despised God's judgments, and greatly feared what were foolishly divined. For when any one, by looking at the stars, threatened them with some calamity, they were immediately terrified; but when God denounced on them, as with the sound of a trumpet, a calamity by his Prophets, they were not

[258] Here the preceding lecture ends in the original; but in order to keep the chapters distinct, this section has been transferred to the present lecture. A similar arrangement is adopted as to the last lecture in this volume. — Ed.

at all moved. But it will be better to examine the very words of the Prophet, as then we shall more plainly see the drift of the whole.

Learn not, he says, the way of the nations The Hebrew grammarians take {אל}, al {את} at. [259] Way, we know, is everywhere taken for all those customs and habits by which human life is regulated, He then forbids them to pay attention to the rules of life observed by the Gentiles. And one thing he specifies, Be not terrified by celestial signs. He afterwards shews how vain were the practices of the Gentiles; being devoted to idols, they worshipped them in the place of God, though framed by the skill of man. But there are other words added, For the heathens are terrified by them There is a threefold exposition of this clause. Some take {כי}, ki, properly a causative, in the sense of {כ}, caph, which denotes likeness, ``as the Gentiles are terrified by them.'' Others regard it as an adversative, ``though,'' and {כי}, ki, has often this meaning. There are also others who give this explanation, ``For it is the case with the Gentiles, that they are terrified by them;'' as though God had said, that it was extremely absurd in the Jews to be terrified by celestial signs, for they ought to have left this folly, or rather madness, to the Gentiles, as God regarded them as wholly blind. Let us now come to the subject.

Learn not, he says, the way of the Gentiles This is a general precept. The law was to the Jews a rule which was sure, and prescribed to them the limits of duty; they ought, therefore, to have followed what God taught them in his law, and not to have turned aside either to the right hand or to the left, according to what Moses also had said. But as human minds are always wanton, they were very desirous of knowing what the Gentiles observed; but whenever this wantonness possesses men's minds, they necessarily blend darkness with light. It was then, for this reason, that Jeremiah reminded them, that nothing was to be learnt from the Gentiles; as though he had said, ``Ye ought to be satisfied with the simple doctrine of the law; for unless ye are content with having God as your teacher, ye will necessarily go astray: unless, then, ye seek wilfully to err, keep the way which is pointed out to you in the law, and turn not aside to the rites and practices of the Gentiles.''

After having given them a general command not to turn aside from the plain doctrine of the law, he specifies one thing in particular, Be not terrified by celestial signs, that is, ``Do not suppose that prosperity or adversity depends on the position or aspect of the stars.'' There seems, however, to be here some inconsistency, for he mentions the stars as signs; it hence follows that something is intimated by their position; and Moses also says, that the sun and moon, and all the stars, (and especially the planets,) would be for signs. There are, at the same time, in the firmament, twelve signs by which astrologers especially make their calculations. Since then God has, from the beginning of the creation, appointed what they call the fixed stars in the firmament, as well as the planets, to be for signs, the Prophet seems not to have done right in forbidding the Jews to fear such signs; for these signs in the heavens are not the vain fictions of men, but what God has created and appointed;

[259] The Sept. and Vulg. render it "according" — {κατὰ} --- juxta. It is omitted in the Syr. Blayney renders the line thus: --- ``Unto the way of the heathen conform ye not.'' We may view it as a negative, thus: --- ``No, the way of the heathen learn not.'' But it is most probable a typographical error for {את} as Jeremiah so writes at least in two other instances, Jeremiah 2:23, and Jeremiah 12:16. --- Ed

and we have already stated that the stars are not called signs through the foolish conceit of men, but this character was given them by God himself when they were first created; and if the stars presage to us either prosperity or adversity, it follows that they ought to be dreaded by us.

But the Prophet here does not use the word signs in its proper meaning; for he refers not to its true origin, but accommodates himself to the notions which then prevailed; [260] and we must bear in mind what I have already said, that the Egyptians and Chaldeans were much given to that astrology, which is called at this day judiciary. The word itself may be allowed; but it has been long ago profaned by wicked and unprincipled men, whose object has been to make gain by mere falsehoods. There is no doubt but that the Egyptians and the Chaldeans were true astrologers, and understood the art, which in itself is praiseworthy; for to observe the stars, what else is it, but to contemplate that wonderful workmanship, in which the power, as well as the wisdom and goodness of God, shines forth? And, indeed, astrology may justly be called the alphabet of theology; for no one can with a right mind come to the contemplation of the celestial framework, without being enraptured with admiration at the display of God's wisdom, as well as of his power and goodness. I have no doubt, then, but that the Chaldeans and the Egyptians had learned that art, which in itself is not only to be approved, but is also most useful, and contains not only the most delightful speculations, but ought also to contribute much towards exciting in the hearts of men a high reverence for God. Hence Moses was instructed from his childhood in that art, and also Daniel among the Chaldeans. (Acts 7:22; Daniel 1:17, 20.) Moses learned astrology as understood by the Egyptians, and Daniel as known by the Chaldeans; but the art among them was at that time much adulterated; for they had mingled, as I have already said, foolish divinations with the true and genuine science.

As then the Prophet's meaning seems evident, the truth remains fixed, that the sun, and moon, and other planets, and the fixed stars in the firmament, are for signs. But we must notice also here the purpose for which God intended the sun and moon to be signs. His purpose was, that the lunar course should complete one month, and that the solar course should complete one year. And then the twelve signs were designed to answer another purpose: for when the sun is in Cancer it has not the same power and influence as when it is in Virgo; and it differs as to the other signs. In short, as to the order of nature, the stars, the planets, as well as the fixed stars, are to us for signs. We number the years by the solar course, and the months by the lunar; and then the sun, with respect to the twelve signs, introduces the spring, then the summer, then the autumn, and lastly the winter. There are other purposes; but we include in one sentence whatever can be said of the celestial signs, when we say, that they have a reference to the order of nature. Whosoever, then, seeks to make more of these signs, confounds the order established by God,

[260] Blayney gives a similar explanation — "The sun, moon, and stars are said indeed to have been created and set in the firmament for 'signs.' (Genesis 1:14) But hereby is meant, that they should serve as natural marks, serving to distinguish, by their periodical revolutions and appearances, the various times and seasons; which, however, is a very different use from that of prognosticating future events, or causing any alteration in the fortunes of men." — Ed.

as the Chaldeans formerly did, and also the Egyptians, when they sought to ascend higher than reason warranted: they tried to conjecture by the position of the stars what would be the fates of all nations; and then they dared to come down to the cases of individuals. Hence arose the casters of nativities. Then they first began more anxiously to philosophize, that the sun, when in a certain sign, portends the death of an only son, and happy events to another. But these are things, as we have said, which are beyond the usual order of nature. That there is to be, for instance, summer and winter, this is natural and common; but that there is to be war between one nation and another, this is not by the usual order of things, nor takes place according to what nature appoints, but through the ambition and avarice of men. The hidden providence of God, indeed, rules; but we speak of causes, which ought to be understood by us, and which can be comprehended by us, for they are within the reach of our understanding. It must at the same time be observed, that the course of the stars is in itself of no moment; for we see that God varies the seasons: there is not the same state of weather; we have no winters and no summers exactly alike; there is no year which is not dissimilar to the former; and the third which follows, differs from the second.

We hence, then, learn that God has so formed and ordered the sun, and the moon, and all the stars, that he himself still governs and changes the seasons as it pleases him. In this way we account for sterilities, and pestilences, and other things of this kind. When the air seems temperate, pestilence prevails, the year is less fruitful, and men are famished, and no cause appears. Then this diversity in nature itself shews that God has not resigned his power to the stars, but that he so works by them, that he still holds the reins of government, and that he, according to his own will, rules the world in a way different from what even the acutest can divine by the stars. Yet this is no reason why we should deny to them the office which I have mentioned. But they who exceed the limits fixed by God, and seek to form conjectures respecting war in this country and peace in that countrymthey who thus seek to learn from the stars what is beyond the order of nature, blend heaven and earth together. The Prophet, no doubt, intended to condemn this madness when he forbade the Jews to attend to the celestial signs so as to dread them.

But the reason also must be noticed, why the Prophet so severely condemned that fear which prevailed among the Gentiles: it was for this, because when the opinion prevailed that all events depended on the stars, the fearof God was removed, and nothing was ascribed to his judgments, faith was extinguished, and prayer to God, and all the ordinances of religion, were reduced to nothing. For all the astrologers, who falsely assume so honorable a name, yea those unprincipled men, who add to their impostures the name of judiciary astrology, hold and maintain, that a judgment respecting man's life ought to be formed by the horoscope, as though the fortune of every one depended on the stars. When, therefore, any one is born at a certain hour, this or that condition, according to them, awaits him. Thus they imagine that there is a fate, or some necessity, which holds a man bound to the influence of the sun, moon, and stars: for he was born when the sun was in the tail of that sign or in the head of another; his birth portends such and such fortune; he will live but a short

time, or he will live long. Thus they judge. And they go still farther, and pronounce on every occurrence, ``Such will be the issue of this expedition; this during the year will be unhappily undertaken, but that will succeed.'' Afterwards, when nativity is not taken into an account, they subject the whole human race to the uncontrollable influence of the stars: ``See, if you undertake this business on such a day, you will succeed; but if you begin before mid-day, the issue will be unsuccessful.'' Thus they divine concerning the whole life of man with regard to each of his actions: but God never intended the stars to be signs for such purposes.

Now, as I have said, it hence follows that God does not rule, and that thus faith is extinguished, and all the exercises of religion are reduced to nothing. For whosoever is persuaded that he is bound by necessity, because the horoscope is of such a character, he must necessarily die at such an hour, and necessarily die of a certain kind of death, --- will any one who has this conviction call on God? will he commend his life to his keeping? And then, when any adversity happens, who will bear it as a punishment for his sins? Will he acknowledge that he is called to judgment by God? And if he should prosper, will he be led to sing praises to God?

We hence see that this divination extinguishes all religion; for there will be no faith, there will be no recognition of punishment, no acknowledgment of God's blessings, and no concern for sin, whenever this diabolical error possesses our minds, --- that we are subject to the stars, that such and such is our nativity, and that the stars portend some kind of death every day and every moment. This, then, is what is especially intended by the Prophet in forbidding the Jews to be terrified by the celestial signs; for the Chaldeans, no doubt, prophesied that they should have a new empire; and thus they frightened the miserable Jews: ``It is all over with us, for the astrologers among the Chaldeans have so spoken; and on the other hand the Egyptians see also that this has been foreshewn by the position of the stars.'' Thus it happened that the Jews became, as it were, wholly lifeless. Nor did they remember what God had so often, and for so many years, threatened by his Prophets to do, in case they continued to provoke his wrath. Of God's judgment they made no account; and yet the persuasion, that the Chaldeans announced a judgment by the stars, and that there would be some convulsion, filled them with terror and amazement. Hence the Prophet, in order to lead them to repentance, as well as to faith, which are the two essentials of religion, and include in them the perfection of true wisdom, speaks thus to them in effect, ``Fear not the stars, but fear God.'' For there is implied a contrast between God and the stars; as though he had said, ``When any adversity happens to you, know that you are chastised by God's hand, who is a just avenger of sins.'' This was to teach them repentance; it was to shew them that they justly suffered, because they had been perverse in their wickedness. Then follows the other fact, that though the stars threatened calamity and destruction, they were to flee to God's mercy and never doubt of their safety, provided he was propitious to them. We now then understand the Prophet's object in telling them not to fear the stars.

More things might be said, but! study brevity as far as I can; and I trust that I have briefly included what is sufficient for the understanding of this passage. There are many, I know, at this day foolishly curious, and hence wish some account to be

made of judiciary astrology; and this delirium has taken possession of some pious men and really learned: but we see what God here declares by his servant. And I wonder that some are thus credulous as to the stars, who yet speak with extreme subtlety on free-will. They would have the events of things fortuitous, they would have it that men act freely in both ways, and they hate and abhor fate; and yet they confine God as it were in a prison, and would have the stars to rule. This is to me a prodigy, not a sign. But all these things I leave. Let the plain doctrine of the Prophet be deemed sufficient by us, when he says, that we are not to be terrified by signs, for it belongs to the Gentiles to be thus terrified; for I am disposed to take this meaning, --- that the Prophet says that this was a kind of blindness which belonged to them: ``Leave,'' he says, ``this folly to the Gentiles; it is no wonder that they labor under so many errors and delusions, for celestial truth has never shone upon them; but it becomes you to fear God and to rely on his mercy.'' It follows ---

Jeremiah 10:3

3. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest (the work of the hands of the workman) with the axe.

3. Quoniam statuta populorum vanitas est: nam lignum a sylva scindit, opus manuum artificis dolabra (vel, in securi; nam ponitur ,{ב} quoe est nota instrumenti apud Hebroeos.)

The Prophet seems to break off his subject, and even to reason inconclusively; for he had said in the last verse, ``Learn not the rites of the Gentiles, and fear not the celestial signs;'' and he now adds, Because the rites of the Gentiles are vanity; for wood they cut down from the forest. He seems then, as though forgetting himself, to have passed off to idols. But we must observe, that the Jews were influenced by that ancient opinion, that the Chaldeans and the Egyptians were alone wise, and that they had acquired a fame of this kind among all nations. We find also that heathen writers, when speaking of the origin of the sciences, trace them up to the Chaldeans and the Egyptians; for with them, it is said, have originated astrology and all the liberal sciences. The Jews then, no doubt, allowed so much authority to the Chaldeans and the Egyptians, that their minds, being possessed by that prejudice, could discern nothing aright. The Prophet then shakes off from them this stupidity, and shews how foolish they were, who yet would have themselves to be alone deemed wise, and regarded others, compared with themselves, as barbarous and ignorant. We now then see why the Prophet connects idolatry with that false and spurious astrology which he had mentioned.

He says, Laws: the word, {חקות}, chekut, means strictly, statutes. The word, {חק} chek, signifies to decree, or to write; and hence decrees are called {חקות}, chekut. The word Law is general; and one of those which are special and often occurs in Scripture, is the statute. Some render it ``Edict;'' and the verb means to publish by edict. But this word is often applied to ceremonies and rites. He then says, that the rites of the nations were vanity.

He then proves this, Because they cut for themselves trees from the forest; and after having polished them by art, they think them to be gods. How detestable was this madness, to think that a tree, cut from the forest, was a god, as soon as it as-

sumed a certain form or shape! As then a madness, so great and so monstrous, prevailed among the Chaldeans and the Egyptians, what right knowledge or judgment could have been in them? The Jews then were very foolish in thinking that they were very clear --- sighted. ``They are,'' he says, ``brute animals; for it is wholly contrary to reason to suppose that a god can be made from a dead piece of wood. When, therefore, the Chaldeans and the Egyptians amaze and astonish you through the influence of a false opinion, derived from nothing, that they are alone wise, do ye not see that ye are doubly and trebly mad? for where is their wisdom, when they thus make gods from trunks of trees?''

We now then perceive the design of the Prophet: but as these circumstances have not been considered by interpreters, they have only elicited a frigid doctrine and gathered some general thoughts. But when any one rightly and carefully examines the design of the Prophet, he will find how important is what he teaches; and no one can otherwise rightly understand what Jeremiah means.

A tree then does one cut, etc.: he uses the singular number. [261] He then adds, the work of the hands of the artificer by the ax He shews that nature itself is changed through the false imagination of men; for as soon as it takes a new form, it seems to be no longer a tree. The tree, while it grows, when it produces fruit, is not worshipped as God; but when it is cut down, the dead and dry trunk is substituted in the place of God: for what reason? even because the ax has been applied. Some render it ``hatchet,'' hache, ou doloire, which is the same; for there is no ambiguity in the meaning: they cut down trees from the forests; and then after the tree was formed by the ax and worked by the hands of the artificer, what follows was done to it ---

Jeremiah 10:4-5

4. They deck it with silver and with gold; the fasten it with nails and with the hammers, that it move not.

4. Argento et auro pulchrificant (hoc est, exornant) illud; clavis et malleis fortificant (hoc est, bene defigunt;) et non movebitur (hoc est, ut non moveatur.)

5. They are upright as the palm-tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.

5. Sicuti palma aequalis (hoc est, stat effigies illa aequalis tanquam palma, id est, assurgit in rectitudinem;) et non loquuntur; et tollendo tolluntur, quia non ambulabunt (hoc est, non possunt ambulare:) ne timeatis ab illis; quia non male faciunt, atque etiam bene facere non penes ipsos.

He goes on with the same subject, and borrows his words from the forty --- fourth

[261] This is not correct, the verb is plural, and there is no different reading. The Vulgate has led Calvin and our translators astray here. The other versions never changed the form of the sentence. The verse may be thus rendered, — 3. Verily, the customs of the nations are very vanity; For a tree from the forest they cut down, — The work of the hands of the worker with the ax! Then verbs in the plural number follow in the next verse, — 4. With silver and with gold they beautify, With nails and with hammers they fasten them, So that none may move them The verb for “move” is in Hiphil; it means in Kal to totter, “that none may cause them to totter.” But the Septuagint have rendered the verb “cut down” as a passive participle, {,כרות transposing the ;{ו} and Venema takes this as the proper reading, --- ``For a tree from the forest is cut down.'' But this does not run well with the following verse. The nations or heathens, is the nominative to all the verbs. Venema renders the last line of the fourth verse, --- That nothing may make them to reel. He considers that {לא} means often ``nothing;'' but it means also sometimes, ``none,'' or no one. --- Ed

chapter of Isaiah (Isaiah 44); for the passage is wholly similar. Jeremiah, being later, was induced to take the words from his predecessor, that his own nation might be more impressed, on finding that the same thing was said by two Prophets, and that thus they had two witnesses.

He then says that these wise men, who filled the Jews with wonder and astonishment, adorned their images, or statues, with silver and gold, and afterward fixed them with nails and with hammers, that they might not move Some refer the last word to the metal, ``that the pieces might not come off,'' as the verb sometimes means to depart. But the simpler meaning is, that the statues were fixed by nails and hammers, that they might not be moved. Then the Prophet adds by way of concession, They are indeed erect as the palm-trees; and thus there appears in them something remarkable: but they speak not; and then, being raised they are raised, that is, they cannot move themselves; for they cannot walk Then he says, Be not afraid of them; for they do no evil, nor is it in their power to do good

We now see what the Prophet meant to teach us, --- that the wisdom of the Chaldeans, and also of the Egyptians, was celebrated throughout the world, and also so blinded the Jews, or so enraptured, them, that they thought that nothing proceeded from them but what deserved to be known and esteemed. In order therefore to remove and demolish this false notion, he shews that they were beyond measure foolish; for what could have been more sottish than to think that the nature of a tree is changed as soon as it receives a new form? How? By the hand of the artificer. Can it be in the power of man to make a god at his will? This is a folly which heathen authors have derided. Horace has this sentence: ---

``When the workman was uncertain whether to make a bench or Priapus, He chose rather to make a god.'' [262]

That poet, as he dared not generally to condemn the madness which then prevailed, indirectly shewed how shameful it was to make a log of wood a god, because the workman had given it a form. The very richest worshipped a wooden god, while he despised the artificer! He who would not have condescended to give the workman a cup of water, yet prostrated himself befbre the god which the workman had made! This then is what our Prophet now says, ``Behold, with silver and gold do they adorn trunks of trees; they indeed stood up, for they are erect statues;'' and he compares them to palm-trees, because they stood high: and he says, ``but they speak not; they are raised up, for they have no life; hence fear them not:'' and then he adds, ``They cannot do evil, and it is not in their power to do good.''

The Prophet seems to speak improperly when he says that they were not gods, because they could do no evil; for it is wholly contrary to the nature of the only true God to do evil: but the Prophet, according to what is common, uses the word for the infliction of punishment. God, then, is said to do evil, not because he does harm to any one, not because he does wrong to any mortals, but because he chastises them for their sins. And it is a way of speaking derived from the common judgment of man, for we call those things evils which are afflictions to us; for famine, diseases, poverty,

[262] Cum faber incertus scanmum faceretne Priapm, Maluit esse Demu." — Hor. Lib. 1, Sat. 8.

cold, heat, disgrace, and things of this kind, are called afflictions or adversities. Now, the Prophet says, that the idols of the Gentiles, or their fictitious gods, do no evil, that is, they have no power to inflict punishment on men. And this is taken from Isaiah. God uses there a twofold argument, while claiming divinity to himself alone: he says,

``I alone am he who foresees and predicts future things;''

and hence I am God alone; and then he says,

``I alone am he who do good and evil;''

hence I alone am God. (Isaiah 45:22; Isaiah 48:3, 5.) He says, that he doeth evil, because he is the Judge of the world. We hence see that this expression is not to be taken in a bad sense, but, as I have said, it is to be taken in a sense used by men; for we consider and call those punishments, with which God visits us, evils. It follows ---

Jeremiah 10:6

6. Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O LORD; thou art great, and thy name is great in might.

6. A non [263] (vel, ab eo quod non, hoc est, ab ultimis temporibus non) sicut tu Jehova reperietur; magnus tu, et magnum nomen tuum in fortitudine.

As the truth respecting the gods of the heathens, that they are mere figments, would be useless and of no moment, were not the knowledge of the, true God added, the Prophet now introduces God himself. And there is another reason; for no one could know that these wooden and stony gods are of no account, were not the truth respecting the true God to shine forth. Whosoever does not understand that there is a God, and does not know who or what he is, can never be really influenced by this truth, that the gods of the heathens are demons, and that all their superstitions are sacrilegious.

We now then perceive why the Prophet turns to the true God: it was, that the brightness of God's glory might dissipate the darkness in which the Gentiles were involved, and also, that true religion might really influence the hearts of men, so that by acknowledging the one true God, to whose power we ought to submit, they might not only despise and repudiate all idols, but also hate and abhor them. The rest to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast made heaven and earth for our sake, and hast testified by thy servant Moses, that the sun, as well as the moon, to which foolish heathens ascribe divinity, are to be serviceable to us, and that we are to use them as though they were our servants, --- O grant that we may, by thy so many blessings, have our minds raised upwards and contemplate thy true glory, so that we may faithfully worship thee only, and surrender ourselves so entirely to thee, that while we enjoy the benefits derived from all the stars, and also from the earth, we may know that we are bound to thee by so many favors, in order that we may be more and more roused to attend to what is just and right, and thus endeavor to glorify on earth thy name, that we may at length enjoy that blessed glory which has

[263] The word is, {:{מאין the {מ} here is not a preposition, but a formative, and the word means none. So all the versions and the Targum render it. The proper rendering of the verse is --- None is like thee, Jehovah; Great art thou, And great is thy name, in strength. --- Ed.

been provided for us by Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Fortieth

We began yesterday to explain the sixth verse, in which Jeremiah says, From no time has there been found any like the true God, for he is great, and great is his name in power. This sentence appears, indeed, unmeaning or very common as to its idea, in negativing the notion that there has been any in all the ages like to God: but as the world by its figments has ever obscured the glory of the true God, there is in this sentence what is of great importance, for it says that God possesses his own peculiar dignity, and shines far above all fictitious deities. The same view is to be taken of the second clause, Thou art great Who will not concede greatness to God? yet he is deprived of it by most; for when any one devises for himself a god, he robs the true God of his own greatness, and makes him as it were one like many other gods. If we bear in mind how men depreciate God's glory, it is easy for us to see, that he is not uselessly called here great, as he is in many other places. But I only touch here on these things briefly, as I have elsewhere discussed them more at large.

He says that God's name is great in power; for idols had a celebrated name among all nations, but had no power. Though many things have been related of their idols by the Grecians and Italians, as well as by the Orientals, yet it is certain that no proof has been given to shew that they worshipped true gods. Hence the Prophet.declares here that greatness belbngs to God alone, as his power has been made known, and has fully manifested his own peculiar glory. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 10:7

7. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee.

7. Quis non timebit to rex gentium? quia tibi convenit; nam inter omnes sapientes gentium et in omnibus regnis eorum, a nullo tempore similis tibi, (vel, sicut tu, ad verbum.)

The Prophet exclaims, Who will not fear thee? This question is very emphatical, as though he indignantly rebuked the stupidity of all those who acknowledged not the only true God, as if he had said, ``Whence is it that thou art not feared throughout the whole world? Surely were there a spark of right knowledge in men, they would acknowledge thee as the only true God, and having found this truth, would submit to thy power. When, therefore, men invent for themselves various gods, and when every one is led here and there without any judgment, it is a monstrous thing; for when the subject is pressed on the attention of the rudest, they confess that there, is some supreme deity, and are at length constrained to allow that there is but one true God; whence then is it that there is such a multitude and variety of gods in the world? How is it that they who hold this principle --- that God ought to be worshipped --- fall away, and adopt many gods, and never can determine who the true God is, or how he is to be worshipped?'' We now understand the object of the Prophet in exclaiming, as through astonishment, Who will not fear thee, the King of nations?

We know that the true God was then despised by the heathens; and we also know

that his law was regarded with contempt, and even els an abomination: What then does this question mean? even what I have already stated: The Prophet indignantly says, that it was a monstrous thing, bordering on madness, that men paid no regard to the only true God, but went astray after their own foolish devices. And he calls him the King of the nations, not that the nations submitted to his authority, but because he manifested evidences of his power everywhere, which might have induced the rudest to shew him reverence, were they not extremely stupid. We then see that this is not said to the honor of the nations, but on the contrary, that their ingratitude might be exposed to shame in not honoring God, who manifested his power among them.

Then follows what confirms this: For to thee it belongs; for among all the wise of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, from no time has there been one like to thee He says that it belongs to God, that is, that all the world should fear him. Some render {יאתה} iate, as a noun, and take it as signifying ``honor;'' and others render it ``government,'' or authority; but this cannot be received. He then says, it belongs to God. What? Some say, ``glory or dominion belongs to thee.'' But it must be referred to the beginning of the verse: there is here a figure called Zeugma, and the meaning is, God deserves this, that is, to be feared by all. H.e then speaks of fear, and says that it belongs to God. What is meant is, that the glory of God shines so much as to be sufficient to arrest and engage all the thoughts of men, and that they are therefore extremely stupid when they pass by and forsake him, and turn to their own devices, and invent gods according to their own fancies. [264]

The Prophet then confirms what we have already said --- that all men who worship not nor fear the only true God are detestable beings, because so much of his glory shines forth, that renders all bound to acknowledge him. It then follows, that those who are carried away into various superstitions are to the last degree stupid and brutish; for God renders his glory conspicuous everywhere, so that it ought to engage and occupy the thoughts of all men; and it would do so were they not led away by their own vanity.

We hence also learn that the pretext of ignorance made by unbelievers is wholly vain. There are those who on the first view seem to be excusable for their error, as they have not been taught, and never understood who the true God is; but yet there is in them the blame of neglect as well as of wickedness, for they wilfully neglect and despise the only true God. As then the unbelieving take delight in their errors, they are to be held guilty. And this is what the Prophet means by saying that God was worthy of glory --- the glory of being feared by all: and this he more fully confirms when he says, ``Among all the wise, and in all kingdoms,'' that is, among all the princes who seemed to excel in wisdom in governing the world, ``no other God could be found throughout all the ages.''

[264] This verse is omitted in the Septuagint. The sentence, “To thee it belongs, is in the Vulgate and Syriac, “Thine is the honor;” and in theTargum and Arabic, “Thine is the kingdom.” Blayney gives this version, — “When he shall approach unto thee.” But this has hardly a meaning here, and far less has the rendering of Horsley, — “Surely unto thee shall be the coming;” i.e.,” The general coming, the universal resort.” The bishop saw predictions everywhere. The explanation of Calvin is the most satisfactory. The act mentioned in the preceding clause, “fear,” is to be understood as the nominative case. — Ed.

He repeats again the word {מאין} main, of which we spoke yesterday. [265] It is the same as though the Prophet had said, ``Let all the wise men and philosophers come forth, let all those counsellors who assume great wisdom appear, and let them adduce whatever they can allege; doubtless God will ever defend his own glory against all their frivolous arguments, so that they must depart confounded; nor shall they be able, however willing they may be, to bring any solid objection against him.'' By these words, then, the Prophet intimates that it is vain to boast of philosophic reasons, and that the counsels of princes, who esteem themselves very acute in civil affairs, will be adduced in vain; for all will be covered with shame, and be constrained to be silent, when God makes known his glory. Indeed the glory of God appears everywhere so conspicuously, that the rudest ought to perceive it, that the wise, who fly above the heavens as philosophers, who search all the secrets of nature, do not understand what is, as they say, abroad in the open air; for God manifests himself to the simple, and even to children. We now perceive the design of the Prophet, when he says, From no times has been found any like to God, not only among the vulgar or common men, but among the wise, and princes, and kings' counsellors. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 10:8

8. But they are altogether brutish and foolish; the stock is a doctrine of vanities.

8. Et in uno stulti sunt et fatui sunt; eruditio vanitatum lignum est.

The Prophet shews here, in one sentence, that the wisest in the whole world could be proved guilty of the greatest madness, or of a twofold folly, because they willingly worshipped the trunks of trees, and they worshipped stones; for Under one kind he includes the other. There is no one, he says, however intelligent, who does not approve of the superstitions of the people, who does not bend the knee before a wood or a stone. There have been, indeed, a few in the world who ridiculed such sottishness, but no one dared openly to condemn it, and no one introduced anything better. And even the Platonics hold that the Greeks had not without reason invented gods like men; and they say that there was not so much judgment among the barbarians as to form such ideas of the gods as were suitable to their nature. However this may have been, it is evident that the grossest superstitions of the nations were ever approved by all their wise men.

The Prophet then shews that there was no need of a long discussion to discover the vanity of the wise; In one, in one thing, he says; and there is emphasis in this word, when he says, In one thing they are foolish and fatuitous; for there is to be understood a contrast, as though he had said, ``I will not here join together many heads of accusation against them to expose their folly, one thing is sufficient; this one sentence is enough to condemn them, --- that wood is the teaching of vanities.'' [266] We have stated what the Prophet means, even that all the wise, who together

[265] All the versions and the Targum, as in the former instance, do not regard the {ם as a preposition, but render the word by ``none,'' or no one. --- Ed

[266] The word {באחת is rendered by the Versions and the Targum, alike, equally or together. Literally, ``in one,'' that is, altogether. Calvin rather refines here. The verse may be thus rendered, --- But they are together brutish and stupid; The teaching of vanities the wood is. Literally, ``the wood it,'' but as Gataker says, the pronoun is often used in Hebrew for the substantive verb. The phrase is elliptical, no unusual thing in Hebrew. It may be thus, rendering in full, --- The teaching of vanities, is the teaching of the wood, or respecting the wood. What they taught respecting the wooden idols was ``vanities,'' that is, very or

with the vulgar worshipped gods made of wood and stone, were very foolish: but we must notice the import of the expression, The teaching of vanities is the wood. It is, as we have said, an instance of a part being put for the whole; for under ``wood'' Jeremiah includes statues of stone, and others made of different materials; as though he had said, ``Every form or effigy, representing a god, is the teaching of vanities.'' He takes this as granted; and yet there had been, as we have lately stated, a great and fierce contention among the wise men on this subject; but the Prophet deigned not to contend or seriously to dispute with them, for the thing itself was sufficiently evident, that is, that nothing can be more absurd than to worship the trunk of a tree or a stone.

Now we may from this passage draw a general truth, --- that when men seek to represent God under any visible form, they give way to the delusions and impostures of Satan. Well known is that sentence of Gregory to Serenus, the Bishop of Marseilles, when that good man cast down the images which he saw led to ungodly worship, and purged the churches of Marseilles from such pollutions: Gregory, though a pious man, yet wrote very foolishly --- that Serenus acted rightly and wisely in forbidding images to be worshipped, but that he yet acted inconsiderately by emptying the churches of them; for ``they are,'' he said, ``the books of the simple:'' this is the conclusion of his epistle. And it is ever in the mouth of Papists --- that images are the books of the simple. At the same time I would they retained this truth avowed by Gregory, that they ought not to be worshipped. They worship and adore them, as it is well known, in the place of God. But as I have already said, that answer of Gregory was puerile and foolish: for we hear what the Prophet says, --- that in wood and stone and in every outward representation there is vanity, as Habakkuk also in the second chapter, where He speaks of idols, calls an idol the teacher of vanity. Every statue, every image, by which foolish men seek to represent God, is a teacher of falsehood. So our Prophet says, --- that the teaching of vanities is found in all statues, because God is thus misrepresented; for what can be in a wood or stone that is like the infinite power of God, or his incomprehensible essence and majesty? Men, therefore, offer a serious affront to God when they thus deform him, as Paul also in Romans 1:25, says, --- that the truth was thus changed into falsehood, that is, when he is supposed to have anything like to what external and dead figures have; as the same Paul further reasons in Acts 17:29, when he says, Do ye think that God is like to wood or stone, to silver or gold? And his argument was at that time suitable; for he had to do with heafilens: he did not refer to the law, though he might have quoted a passage in Deuteronomy, where God reminded the people that he so appeared to them that they saw no similitude; and he might have referred to the testimonies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and of the other Prophets; but as he addressed heathens, even the Athenians, he says, ``One of your poets has said, that we are the offspring of God:'' if we are then, He says, the offspring of God, do ye not draw God down from his celestial throne, when ye seek to delineate him according to your fancies, and suppose that he lies hid in wood or stone, in silver and gold? For some

extremely vain; for so the plural often means. The version ofBlayney, after Castellio, and approved by Horsley, is the following, --- ``The very wood itself being a rebuker of vanities.'' But it is a sentiment not suitable to this place. The most strict meaning of {מוסר} is restraint, and not rebuke; it often means teaching or instruction. --- Ed

life appears at least in men, they are endued with mind and intelligence, and so far they bear some likeness to God: but a dead wood and stone, which are void of sense, --- gold also and silver, which are metals without reason, which have no life, --- what affinity, He says, can these have to God? This subject might be more copiously handled; but I merely explain what the Prophet means, and also shew the import of his doctrine, and how it may be applied for general instruction. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 10:9

9. Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their clothing: they are all the work of cunning men.

9. Argentum percussum (vel, diductum, hoc est, malleo sic contusum, ut redactum sit in laminas; hoc enim significat verbum {רקע} percutere, et ita contundere, ut res diducatur vel protrahatur: argentum ergo laminatum, ut ita loquar, vel, malleo contusum) e Tharsis affertur, et aurum ex Ophas, opus artificis et manus conflatoris; hyacinthus et purpura, vestes eorum; opus sapientum omnes!

The Prophet, anticipating what might be said, refers to the splendor and pomp of idols, and declares that all was frivolous and extremely puerile. Whence was it that the world shewed so much honor to idols, except that their pomp dazzled the eyes of men? The devil has also by this artifice ever deluded the unbelieving; for he has exhibited in idols something that involved men's minds in darkness.

The Prophet then assails these foolish imaginations, and says, Silver is brought from Tharsis, that is, from Cilicia; for so the Scripture designates that transmarine country, which lies opposed to Judea; and we know that Cilicia was over against Judea; for the Mediterranean Sea intervenes between Syria and Cilicia; and the sea of Tharsis is what they call that part which extended towards Cilicia and Asia Minor. The Prophet then says; that it was brought from a far country. Well, he says, the fact is so; and then it is added that gold was brought from Uphaz Some have explained this last word wrongly, by saying that it means pure or fine gold; but it appears from this place and many others, that it is the name of a country, that is, Persia, or one not far from Persia: it was at least a country eastward of Judea. He then says, gold is brought from Uphaz; and he mentions the workmanship, the work of the artificer; that is, it is not silver and gold in its rude state; but they are so elegantly wrought, that they readily attract the eyes of men. Then he adds the hands (he speaks in the plural number) of the melter; that is, the silver and gold were melted and were made to assume a certain form; and then art was employed, which gave an increased polish to these forms which came out of the furnace. He afterwards says, The hyacinth and purple are their vestments; that is, it is not enough to have the precious metal, and that cast into an elegant and lovely form, but it must be clothed in purple and hyacinth. He says in the last place, that the work was that of the wise; that is, skillful men were chosen, who could in the most perfect manner give expression to every lineament; in short, nothing was left undone. [267]

[267] The verse is literally thus, — 9. Silver extended, from Tarsis it is brought, And gold from Uphaz, — The work of the artizan And of the hands of the founder; Blue and purple their garments, — The work of the wise, all of them. The Septuagint and Arabic have “Mophaz;” the Vulgate, “Ophaz;” the Syriac and the Targum, “Ophir.” Probably the same country is meant,

But the Prophet, though he concedes generally to the unbelieving that they added whatever could add beauty to their idols, yet declares that they were mere trumperies: they are puppets, he says; for man, who is a mortal, cannot make a god: and then, what can art and the toil and labor of man do in this respect? can he change the nature of things? can he make a god from wood and stone? and when a vestment covers the idol of gold or of silver, can it raise it above the heavens, that it may attain a new divinity? We hence see that the Prophet mentions all that was done, that he might taunt the heathens and ridicule their fatuitous trifles; for in their idols there was nothing real, nothing that could be dependd upon. He then subjoins ---

Jeremiah 10:10

10. But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.

10 Atqui Iehova Deus veritas (qui vertunt, Deus veritatis, non observant syntax in Hebraicam; dixisset enim {יהלא} {הוהי} ;{תמא} Iehova ergo Dens veritas,) ipse Deus vita, et rex seculorum; a furore ejus contremiscet terra, et non sustinebunt gentes iram ejus.

The Prophet here exults and triumphs in the name of his God, as though he had overcome and put to flight the erroneous notions of the heathens: for he had spoken, as it appears, contemptuously of their gross errors, and shewed that the wise men of the world were extremely sottish, who were so charmed with wood and stone. He now highly extols the glory of God, and says, But Jehovah is God; that is, let the nations worship their gods, let them recite fables as to their power, and falsely ascribe to them many miracles; but Jehovah, he says, is God When all things are faithfully examined, it will appear evident that He is the only true God, and all the gods of the heathens will of themselves vanish into nothing. This then is the meaning of the Prophet, as though he had said, God himself is sumcient to put to flight all the errors of the heathens, when his majesty appears; for so great is its brightness that it will reduce to nothing whatever the world admires.

He then adds truth. He sets truth here in opposition to vanities. He had said that wood was the teaching of vanities; he now says, God is eternal truth; that is, he has no need of adventitious ornaments; they mask, he says, the idols of the heathens, they are clothed and adorned; but these things have nothing real in them: Jehovah is God the truth; that is, God borrows nothing from anything else, but is satisfied with himself, and his power possesses of itself sufficient authority. God then is truth, and God, he says, is life. After having said that God has real and solid glory in himself, he adds another proof, taken from what is known to men, even that God is life; for though God is in himself incomprehensible, yet he not only sets before our eyes evidences of his glow, but he also renders himself in a manner the object of feeling, as Paul says in Acts 14:17. What he means is, that though men were blind, they could yet by feeling find out God. Though the blind have no sight, yet they can find

and that it had two names. “Blue” is rendered “hyacinth,” violet-color, by all the versions and the Targum. “Uphaz,” according to Bochart, was a country near the Ganges in India, and the same with Ophir. — Ed.

their way by feeling; they go round a hall or a room, and by feeling find the door; and when they wish to enter into a room, they find the door by the same means. But there is no need, says Paul, for us to depart from ourselves; for whosoever will examine himself will find God within; for in him we live and move and have our being. (Acts 17:28.) Were we then to object and say, that God is incomprehensible, and that we cannot ascend to the height of his glory, doubtless there is life in us, and as we have life, we have an evidence of his divinity; for who is so devoid of reason as to say that he lives through himself? Since then men live not of themselves, but obtain life as a favor from another, it follows that God dwells in them. [268]

Now, then, the Prophet, after having spoken of God's essence, descends to what is more evident. And doubtless it is a real knowledge of God, not when we speculate in the air as philosophers do, but when we know by experience that there is one true God --- how? because we exist. We exist not of ourselves, but in and through another, and that is, through the one true God. It hence follows that human life is a clear proof of one supreme God. God then is life and the King of ages For as the world has also been made, as years succeed years, and as there is in this revolution variety and yet such perfect order, who does not see in all this the glory of God? Now, then, we also perceive why the Prophet calls God the King of ages

He then adds, Through his fury tremble will the earth, and the nations will not sustain his wrath As he could not succeed with the heathens, He warns liere the Jews not to provoke the wrath of God, who will be the Judge of the whole world, and will destroy the unbelievers, however blind in darkness they may be. He then warns the Jews not to close their eyes to the glory, which had been more fully open to them. But the Gentiles might by the works of nature have known God, and were inexcusable; yet, the knowledge of him was made plain to the Jews by the law. For this reason Jeremiah says, ``Even though unbelievers now boldly despise God, yet when he shall appear as the Judge of the world, the whole earth must of necessity tremble, and will not be able to bear his presence, though they now proudly reproach true religion.''

But it was not without reason that the Prophet took so much pains on this subject; for the ten tribes had been driven into exile, and the Assyrians and Chaldeans triumphed over God himself, as though he had been overcome, inasmuch as he did not defend the kingdom of Israel, which was under his care and protection; and the miserable Israelites could not but despond when they found themselves so distressed, and cruelly treated and oppressed by the most shameless tyranny; for what could they have thought, but that they had not been the objects of God's care, and that his promises were vain, or that he possessed no sufficient power to preserve them? It is, then, for this reason that the Prophet now so highly extols the power and glory of God, that is, that their calamities might not deject them and lay prostrate the faith

[268] The verse, literally rendered, is as follows: — "But Jehovah, God the truth he, God the life and King eternal; At his wrath tremble will the earth, And not bear will the nations his indignation." It is usual in Hebrew to put nouns for adjectives; divested of this peculiarity, and the future being taken for the present, the verse would run thus: "But Jehovah, the true God is he, The living God and King eternal; At his wrath tremble does the earth, And the nations cannot bear his indignation." "The true God," and "the living God," is the version of the Vulgate and of the Targum; but that of the Syriac and Arab., "the God of truth," and "the God of the living," but no doubt incorrect. — Ed.

of those who thought that they were forsaken.

And this will be more evident from the following verse, where the Prophet uses the Chaldee language; and this is the only verse in the whole book written in Chaldee; and the Chaldee differs much from the Hebrew. We have seen before that Daniel wrote in Chaldee, when he spoke of things pertaining to the Chaldeans; but when he addressed his own people and announced prophecies, belonging especially to the Church of God, he wrote in Hebrew. Hence the book of Daniel is written in Hebrew, except in those parts which he wished to be understood by the Chaldeans; and so does the Prophet in this place.

Jeremiah 10:11

11. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.

11. Sic (secundum hoc) dicetis illis (inquit) Dii (prorsus diverso modo loquitur quam ante, et proximo etiam versu loquitur; dii ergo) qui coelum et terram non fecerunt, pereant e terra et de sub coelis istis.

Now, the reason why he bids the Israelites to speak in the Chaldee language is, because they had been led into exile, and were mingled with the Assyrians and Chaldeans. He then required from those despised exiles an open and a bold confession, as though he had said, ``Even though ye are now in the most miserable bondage, and though the Chaldeans disdainfully oppress you, as if ye were slaves, yet proclaim the glory of God and shrink not from an open confession of your religion, and say to them, in contempt of all their idols, perish must your gods from the earth and from under heaven, for they have not made heaven nor the earth.'' We now understand the meaning of the Prophet. But the rest I shall defer until tomorrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast exhibited thy glory to be seen by us, not only in the heavens and the earth, but also ill the law, in the Prophets, and in the Gospel, and hast so plainly made thyself known to us in thine only --- begotten Son, that ignorance can be no excuse, --- O grant that we may make progress in this knowledge by which thou kindly invitest to thyself, and may so constantly cleave to thee, that none of the errors of the world may draw us aside; but may we stand firm in thy word, which cannot deceive us, until we shall at length come to that celestial blessedness, when we shall enjoy thee face to face in thy glory, having been made fully conformable to thine image in Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Forty-First

We began yesterday to explain the declaration of the Prophet, in which he exhorted the Israelites to constancy, though scattered among the Chaldeans. Their condition was then miserable, because we know that it was that of bondage, and conquerors ruled in a very petulant manner, when a people were subdued by war; but they had been led into exile for the very purpose of degrading them. The Prophet therefore animates them here, that they might not be dejected, but continue in the pure worship of God, and faithfully profess his name.

What he said to them was, May those gods, who created not the heaven and the earth, perish from the earth and from under heaven He assumed this principle ---

that no one ought to be counted God but he who is the creator and maker of heaven and earth; and who could say that gods of wood and stone had created the world? for wood, as well as stone, is a corruptible material. All the statues, which were created gods, had received their form and shape from mortal men. It is hence manifest, that to ascribe divinity to thenl was not only false, but foolish and monstrous. This, then, is the reason why he says, ``May the gods who made not the heaven and earth perish.'' The verb is indeed in the future tense; but we know that the future is often to be taken as an optative in Hebrew. If, however, any one prefers to retain this tense, ``Perish shall the gods who made not the heaven and the earth,'' I shall not contend with him; yet the other view is what I approve, that the Israelites were to imprecate destruction on all idols. [269]

Now that he uses the Chaldee language, is what deserves, as we said yesterday, to be observed; they had then to do with the Chaldeans, who insultingly triumphed over the true God, thinking that they were his conquerors; and they triumphed over him, as though he had been overcome by their swords. Then the Prophet bids the Israelites, boldly and courageously, to proclaim the name and the glory of the true God. Doubtless this could not have been done without immediate danger of death; but it was their duty, as God's true servants, to prefer his glory to their own lives, in opposing the fury of the enemies who then ruled over them, and who had led them to remote countries.

We see how much God makes of the confession of faith; and the whole Scripture shews that this sacrifice is especially approved by him. Hence also it appears how foolishly they talk who say that they cherish faith secretly in their hearts, though they may hide from the world their real sentiments. We see how frigid, nay, how foolish is this excuse, while they seek, by a perfidious silence, to save their own life and to remain in peace with the ungodly. They who at this day live under the Papacy, think that they justly exempt themselves by such an excuse as this --- that they ought not rashly to endanger their lives, as facts prove that such is the rage of the enemies

[269] Critics have unnecessarily suggested a doubt as to the genuineness of this verse, written in Chaldee. They have nothing but conjecture, and even for that conjecture there is no solid reason. It is not omitted in any MS. but one, nor by any of the early versions, nor by the Targum, though paraphrased more than what is commonly done. As to the context, it seems to be wholly necessary; for the meaning of the two following verses cannot be well understood without it, provided they are rendered correctly. I shall first give the three verses, and then point out the connection: — 11. Thus shall ye say to them, "The gods, who have not made the heaven and the earth, Perish from the earth, even from under heaven, shall they: 12. He who made the earth through his power, Who has set in order the world by his wisdom, And through his understanding expanded the heavens, — 13. At his voice when given, Abundance of waters is in the heavens, For he brings clouds from the extremity of the earth; Lightnings for rain he makes, And sends forth the wind from his treasures." The Prophet's object was to shew that the Creator of the world is its ruler. As false gods did not create the world, they do not rule it. The name of the true God is not given in these verses, nor are the gods of the Chaldeans specially named. The gods who were no creators are alone mentioned, and contrasted with them is he who made all things; and of him he says, that "at his voice when given," or literally, "at the voice of his giving," abundance of waters appear, which he brings from the extremity of the earth. He states things as they appear; clouds arise from the horizon, said here to be the extremity of the earth. Then he mentions the most terrific things in nature, thunders, lightnings, and storms, (for that is what is meant here by wind,) as being under the entire control of him who made the heaven and the earth. Thus we see that when the passage is rightly understood, the eleventh verse is necessary as a portion of the context. "He who made," etc. He is put as a sort of nominative absolute, as "gods" is in the former verse. This kind of phraseology is often to be met with in Hebrew. — Ed.

of the gospel, that were any to confess the truth, they would be immediately led to punishment, But we may compare the condition of the ancient people with our own; certainly ours is better than that of the ten tribes, who lived in a foreign land and were treated as slaves. As then the Chaldeans watched them, did they not find the sword daily and constantly ready to be used against them? And yet God bids them to close their eyes to their danger and faithfully to profess what they believed, yea, to detest the idols, which was still more displeasing to the Chaldeans; for he bids them to say, ``The God whom we worship made himself known to Abraham our father, and we worship him, because we have found him to be a Redeemer and a constant preserver of our safety:'' and this is not the only thing that the Prophet bids them to say, but also, ``May your gods perish.'' This was certainly enough to kindle rage in the Chaldeans, even if they had been men of temperate millds; but as they were elated with pride on account of their victory and hated the Jews, such a declaration must have been intolerable to them. What, then, call the Nicodemites of this day say, who indulge their own delusions? for they think it enough if they deny not God in their hearts; and yet being frightened with danger, they either pretend to deny him, or openly shew that they consent to errors.

In short, we see that there is no true religion in the hearts of men, except a confession is made, for there ought to be a consent between the heart and the tongue. But some one may object and say, Is it necessary for the faithful to cry through cross --- ways and the streets of the city, ``There is but one true God?'' I answer, that all have not been chosen to the prophetic office, in order to preach everywhere; but it is commanded to all without exception, to detest idols, where they see the glory of God reproachfully traduced by enemies; for the Prophet meant, that they were to make this answer to the reproaches of those who then took the occasion insultingly to rise up against the true God. It now follows: ---

Jeremiah 10:12-13

12. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.

12. Faciens terram in virtute sua, disponens orbem in sapientia sua, et in sua intelligentia extendit coelos.

13. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.

13. Ad vocem dando sonitum aquarum (vel potius copiam aquarum) in coelis; et ascendere faciens elevationes ab extremitate terrae, fulgura ad pluviam creans (faciens, ut prius,) et educens ventum e thesauris suis.

Jeremiah speaks now again in Hebrew, for he on purpose spoke in Chaldee, to shew that the ungodly were not to be given way to, if they blasphemed and wantonly derided the holy name of God. But as it is necessary that the confession of the mouth should proceed from faith, as fruit from the root, the Prophet here reminds the Israelites that there is but one true God; for, besides him who created the earth, set in order the world, and extended the heavens, there is no other to be found. Since, then, this cannot be said except of one, it follows that all the deities

which the world devises for itself, are false and mere inventions of Satan, by which he deludes mankind. And doubtless no one can courageously oppose such errors, except he who believes in the one true God. We know that there were formerly some among the philosophers who jocularly and facetiously ridiculed the delirious notions of the vulgar; but no one in earnest undertook this cause, nor could they take upon themselves the defense of God's glory, for he was unknown to them. It is therefore necessary, as I have said, that we should be really and truly grounded in the faith before the building can be carried on; for the profession, by which we ascribe glory to God, is, as it were, the superstructure, but faith, concealed within the heart, is the foundation.

We now then understand the Prophet's design in saying, that there is but one, who made the earth. He speaks indeed concisely; but what tie says has more force, when he does not mention God's name, but sets before us his power, as though he had said, ``There is one, there is one, who has created the earth; there is one, who has set in order the world and extended the heavens; as these things cannot be ascribed to many, it follows that men are very absurd in imagining that there are various gods.''

He says that God created the earth by his power He alludes to the solid state of the earth. The philosophers indeed hold that the earth stands naturally in the middle of creation, as it is the heaviest element; and the reason they give that the earth is suspended in mid-air, is, because the center of the world attracts what is most heavy; and these things indeed they wisely discuss. Yet we must go further: for the center of the earth is not the main part of creation; it hence follows that the earth has been suspended in the air, because it has so pleased God. When, therefore, the Prophet commends God's power in fixing the earth, he refers to its firm state.

He then adds, There is one who hath by his wisdom set the world in order He does not indeed say that He is one, but this is what is implied. Though the term {תבל}, tabel, is taken for the earth, it has yet a wider meaning. The Prophet, I have no doubt, includes in it at least the sea. And we know that the Spirit has not spoken in the Law and the Prophets with rigorous exactness, but in a style suited to the common capacities of men. He says then that the world was set in order by God's wisdom: for it is wonderful how the waters mingle with the earth, and yet retain their own habitation, and are restrained from covering the earth: in the earth also itself there is amazing variety; we see in one part mountains, in another small hills; there are meadows, forests, and fields for corn. Indeed, man's industry contributes to this variety; but we see how God hath fitted the earth for different purposes, here then shines forth the wonderful wisdom of God. When again he speaks of the heavens, he says, that they have been expanded by God's knowledge, He indeed employs various expressions, but he means the same thing, --- that God's singular wisdom may be seen in the earth and in the heavens.

Some connect the following verse and explain the verb {נטה} nuthe, differently, --- that God extends the heavens when he covers them with clouds; for the verb {תתו}, tatu, which means the same thing, follows: but the infinite mood is often to be taken for the preterite. As then this is a strained explanation, and too far-fetched,

I reject it. The Prophet, no doubt, speaks of the original formation of the heavens: for when God covers the heavens with clouds, their true form does not appear; besides, the meaning of the verb is perverted, when taken to express the obscuring of the heavens by clouds. They who will impartially examine the passage, will be ready to admit, that the Prophet speaks of the expanding of the heavens. So the Scripture everywhere sets forth God's wisdom as displayed by this wonderfill workmanship; and the heaven is said to have been expanded over the earth, so that it covers it around. (Psalm 104:6.)

Now, though Jeremiah mentions only the word ``heavens,'' yet he includes the wonders which appear in them, such as that the sun performs its daily course --- that it changes its track daily --- that the planets have two motions --- that they appear in different parts --- and that the sun seems now to ascend and then to descend. In short, Jeremiah here extols all the secrets of astrology, when he says, that the heavens have been expanded by God, and expanded with singular and incomparable wisdom. Though, then, he only briefly touches on this wonderful workmanship of God, yet he would have us carefully to dwell on it in our meditations; for all errors and all fancies will soon vanish, when we duly consider the power and wisdom of God, as manifested in the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and in the order observable in the world.

The Prophet then descends to the other works of God, to those which are changeable, for there is in nature a perpetual constancy as to the heavens and the earth; and there are many things subject to changes; as when God darkens the air, when he raises winds, when he pours down rain. These things happen not according to the settled order of the world of which he had spoken. We see then that the Prophet has hitherto referred to the fixed and regular government of the world, to what had been done at the creation. But now, as I have said, he sets before us things of another kind, --- that God gives or sends forth, by his voice, abundance of waters from the heavens Some render {המון} emun, ``sound;'' but it is, on the contrary, to be taken for ``multitude,'' or abundance. Moreover, he takes ``voice'' for thunder: for though it often rains without thunder, yet when God thunders from heaven, there is a sudden change, which not only disturbs the air, but also fills us with dread. As then in this sudden and unexpected change the power of God more strikingly appears, the Prophet says, At his voice he gives abundance of waters

He then says, he makes elevations to ascend; for we see that vapours arise from the earth and ascend upwards. Philosophers shew how this happens: but yet the power of God cannot be excluded, when we say that anything is done according to nature. For we hence more clearly see what the Prophet means, that is, that God has so set in order the world, that when he causes vapours to ascend, he shews that he rules in the heavens and on the earth. And he adds, from the extremity of the earth: for we see that vapors rise at a distance and immediately spread over our heads. Is not this wonderful? And were we not accustomed to such a thing, it could not but fill us with admiration. The Prophet then rouses men here from their torpor, that they may learn to consider what is presented to their view. He goes on and says, creating or making lightnings for the rain, or with the rain: for {ל}, lamed, is taken by some,

as though he had said, that lightnings are mingled with rain: and doubtless we see that these things, fire and rain, are contrary to one another; yet fire generates water, and it dwells also in the midst of a mass of waters: it rains, and yet the air is at the same time kindled with lightnings. Since then God thus mingles contrary things, and makes fire the origin and the cause of rain, is it not so wonderful that it is sufficient, to move the very stones? How great then must be the stupidity of men, when they attend not to so conspicuous a work of God, in which they may see the glory of his wisdom as well as of his power!

He then says, that God brings forth the wind from his treasures He calls hidden places the treasures of God; for whence the winds except from the caverns of the earth? Since, then, the earth, where it is hollow, generates winds, rightly does the Prophet say, that they were the bidden treasures of God. The philosophers also find out the cause why the winds arise from the earth; for the sun attracts vapors and exhalations; from vapors are formed clouds, snows, and rains, according to the fixed order of the middle region of the air. From the exhalations also are formed the thunders, lightnings, the comets also, and the winds; for the exhalations differ from the vapours only in their lightness and rarity, the vapors being thicker and heavier. Then from vapor arises rain; but the exhalation is lighter, and not so thick; hence the exhalations generate thunders as well as winds, according to the heat they contain. How, then, is it that the same exhalation now breaks forth into wind, then into lightnings? It is according to the measure of its heat; when it is dense it rises into the air; but the winds vanish and thus disturb the lower part of the world. These are the things said by philosophers; but the chief thing in philosophy is to have regard to God, who brings the winds out of his treasures, for he keeps them hidden. We wonder that the wind rises suddenly when it is quite calm; who ought not to acknowledge that winds are formed, and are sent here and there at God's pleasure? And hence in Psalm 104:4, they are called the swift messengers of God,

``who makes spirits his messengers.''

It follows: ---

Jeremiah 10:14

14. Every man is brutish in his knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.

14. Stultus est omnis homo a scientia (vertunt alii, praescientia; sed perperam, meo judicio,) pudefactus est omnis conflator a sculptili; quia mendacium conflatile, et non est spiritus in illis.

Some too refinedly explain the beginning of this verse --- that their own subtlety or wisdom, which they arrogate, infatuates men, according to what Paul says, that men become vain in their minds, when they form an idea of God according to their own imagination. (Romans 1:21.) But the Prophet speaks more plainly, for he says, that all artificers were foolish The word lrnowledge is not to be taken here for knowledge of truth, but for the knowledge of artificers, whether carpenters or blacksmiths, or those who either melted or grayed or formed gods of wood, stone, and silver, as we may learn from the second clause of the verse. There is no difficulty as to what is meant, if we duly consider the words of the Prophet; he expresses the same thing in two

ways; foolish, he says, are all our artificers; then he specifies one sort, every founder or melter, etc. We hence see that the Prophet does not use the word knowledge according to its strict meaning, but extends it to skill in workmanship. [270]

But when he says that the artizans were foolish, he connects with them, no doubt, all the worshippers of false gods; but he reprobates their knowledge, who applied whatever skill and knowledge they had to so vain a purpose. Bellold, he says, the worker in gold, and every other artificer, think that they are very ingenious when they elegantly form an idol; they spend all their wits on so vain a thing; what is this but folly? But they think that they make a god by their own hands; yet they cannot change the nature of gold and silver. It is the form only that they add; but this form contains no life. Hence he subjoins, There is no spirit in them He had said before, that they who formed the graven image would be ashamed, or convicted of folly; for he had called them foolish and brutish. Now, {בער}, bor, in Hiphil, means to be foolish; but the noun means a brute animal. Hence he reproachfully compares these illustrious artizans, who gained repute by the elegant forms they gave to their gods, to asses, and oxen, and other brute animals. Some render {נסך}, nusak, ``covering;'' but it signifies, I doubt not, a molten image; for he repeats what he had said, that the founders would be ashamed of the graven image In short, He says, that the molten image was falsehood, for there was in, them no spirit He changes the number, but the meaning is evident.

We have seen before that idols were said to be the teaching of vanities; for they were extremely deceived, and became wholly foolish, who ascribed the glory of God to wood and stone. The heathens might say, that they had never thought such a thing; but facies proved that they were liars and made only vain pretences; for why did they place confidence in their idols? --- why did they bow down before them? --- why did they address to them prayers and supplications? They then believed that God was present in the visible form. Now the Prophet says, that this was the teaching of vanities; because they who made a figure or image of God thought that he was like to gold and silver, and that he had some affinity to dead elements, destitute of reason and understanding. For the same purpose he now adds, that the molten image is falsehood; why? because the truth of God is turned into falsehood, as Paul says, (Romans 1:25.)

It is, therefore, a monstrous absurdity when men imagine that wood or stone is an image of God; for there is no similarity, nor can such a thing enter into man's mind without a grievous and an atrocious indignity being offered to God. The reason

[270] The first, clause of this verse is rendered by the Sept. and Vulg., "Foolish has become every man by knowledge;" by the Syr., "Foolish have all men become without knowledge;" the Arab. and the Targ. convey the same idea with the last. Gataker takes this view and gives this version, "Every man is become brutish for want of knowledge." But as the framers of idols were called, in Jeremiah 10:9, "wise" or cunning men, it is more probable that their boasted knowledge is what is meant here. The verse may be thus rendered — 14. Brutish has every man become by his knowledge; Disgracefully has every founder done as to the graven image, For deception is his cunning; And no spirit is in them. To render the different parts of this verse correspondent, it is necessary to take {הובישׁ as a Hiphil. The connection is between the first and last line, and between the two middle lines. Every man, both the carver and the founder, or melter, were brutish, in employing their knowledge and skill in making idols or images, because there was, after all their toil, no spirit, no life in them. Then the founder acted shamefully in taking the carved thing or image, to cover it with gold or silver, because what he melted was a mere deception. This verse is no prediction, but a representation of the extreme folly and stupidity of idol-makers. This is confirmed by the following verse. --- Ed.

also is to be noticed, For there is no spirit in them God, so to speak, is the life of all things living; now, to call a dead thing an image of God, a thing in which there is no mind nor life, is it not to turn light into darkness? This reason, then, ought to be remembered by us; and it is a sufficient refutation of all such errors, when the Prophet says, that there is no spirit in idols, that is, in wood, stone, gold, and silver, and that they are therefore a He; for God will not have himself to be compared to dead things, without mind and life. He then adds ---

Jeremiah 10:15

15. They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

15. Vanitas sunt, opus illusionum; in tempore visitationis ipsorum peribunt.

He confirms the same thing. What he called before falsehood, {שקר}, shikor, he calls now vanity, {הבל} ebel. They are vanity, he says. He had said that they were falsehood, which means, that men were grossly deceived when they sought the presence of God in dead things, now he says, that they were vanity, and also the work of illusions; but some render the last word ``mockeries,'' taking it in a passive sense; and hence the Chaldee interpreter renders it, ``a thing worthy of ridicule and laughter.'' [271] But I prefer to take it for imposture or deception. Jacob said to his mother, ``I shall be found in the eyes of my father a deceiver;'' but some render the word there ``a mocker.'' But Jacob, on the contrary, meant that he should be found out as one of no credit, or acting in guile, as though he had said, ``I shall be an impostor, and rny father will flnd out the fraud.'' So also in this place, he calls idols the work of deceptions, by which men infatuated themselves. He does not then teach us here that idols deserved to be ridiculed, but he refers to the madness of those who imagined that they were gods, for he had before called them vanity and falsehood; and there is no doubt but that in these various ways he repeats and confirms the same thing.

He afterwards adds, In the time of their visitation they shall perish The pronoun ``their'' may be applied to idols or to the Chaldeans: when the time of visitation shall come; that is, when God shall punish the enemies of his Church, then their idols shall perish: or, when the time shall come for God to visit the idols, they shall perish. Either sense may be admitted; and indeed as to the subject in hand, there is no difference.

The Israelites might have objected and said, ``How is it then that false gods, whom men have devised for themselves, are worshipped, and are in great esteem and highly regarded? How does God suffer and overlook this?'' The Israelites might have raised an objection of this kind. Therefore the Prophet answers them, They shall perish; but it shall be at the time of visitation [272] It is an exhortation to patience, that

[271] So, substantially, is the version of the Sept., Vulg., Syr., and Arab., — "ridiculous — worthy of laughter — foolish — ludicrous." But the word means no such thing. The verb {תעה means to wander, to err, to go astray; in Niphal, to be led astray, to be deceived; and Hiphil, to lead astray, to seduce, to deceive; and it is a Hiphil participle in Genesis 27:12. It is here a reduplicate noun; and Blayney takes it as referring to persons, and not as an abstract noun --- those who greatly err; and this is the best view, as the Prophet has been throughout describing the idol-makers --- Vanity are they (i.e., the idols,) The work of the grossly deluded: At the time of their visitation they shall perish; that is, the grossly deluded. He had before threatened ruin to idols; but he now threatens their makers. --- Ed.

[272] Scott quotes a sermon of Mede, in which he says, "Ye have heard the state of the times, wherein this prophecy is commanded; now let us consider the event. We have heard of the

the faithful might not despond or be weakened in their hopes, though they saw silver gods carried on men's shoulders, though they saw wood and stone set on elevated places, and incense burnt to them and sacrifices offered to them. Though then they saw idols in such esteem, they were not yet to despair or fall away from true religion, for the time of visitation was to be looked for, when God would execute his judgment on the false gods as well as on their worshippets. We now understand why he speaks of visitation. It follows ---

Jeremiah 10:16

16. The portion of Jacob is not like them: for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: The LORD of hosts is his name.

16. Non sicuti illi portio Iacob, quia creator omnium est; et Israel virga haereditatis, ejus, Iehova exercituum nomen ejus.

We have said before, that superstitions cannot be from the heart and boldly rejected, except the true God be known; for the heathens, even when they disapproved of the opinions of the vulgar, yet reasoned on both sides, and knew nothing certain, and had no sure faith. It is, therefore, necessary that we should have previously a knowledge of the true God. Hence the Prophets, whenever they spoke of idols, spoke also of the true God; for it would have been to little purpose to condemn these follies, except they represented God in his own real dignity. For this reason the Prophet says again, that God, who is the portion of Israel, is not like idols.

He calls God the portion of Israel, that he might preserve the people in the pure truth of the law which they had learnt, and with which they had been favored; and thus he draws away the attention of the Israelites from all the inventions of men or of the heathens. The portion then of Israel is not like idols --- how so? For he is the former of all things, that is, the creator of heaven and earth. Then he says, Israel is the rod of his inheritance [273] Rod may be taken for a measuring rod; and I think it ought to be so taken, for he mentions inheritance: for he took the comparison from common practice; as men are wont to measure fields and possessions by a rod. He therefore says, Israel is the rod, that is, the measuring rod of his inheritance He concludes by saying, Jehovah of hosts is his name

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast been pleased to shew thyself so plainly to us, and as thou art pleased to confirm us in thy truth, --- O grant that we may not turn aside either to the right hand or to the left, but depend entirely on thy word, and so cleave to thee that no errors of the world may draw us aside: may we constantly persevere in that faith which we have learnt from thy Law and thy Prophets, and especially from thy gospel, where thou hast made thyself more clearly known to us,

admired oracles of the Gentiles, of Apollo at Delphos, of Jupiter Ammon in Egypt, etc.; but all of them are long since perished. Where is now Bel, the god of Babylon, Nisroch, the god of Assyria, Baal and Astaroth, the gods of Zidonians, Milcom of the Ammonites, Chemosh of Moab, and Tammuz of the Egyptians? Even these also are perished with their names." The partial fulfillment of this prophecy is an evidence of its complete fulfillment, when "the spirit of evil," as Scott says, "whom all idolaters worship, shall be confined to the bottomless pit." — Ed.

[273] This clause is left out in the Septuagint, but retained by the Vulgate, the Targum, and the Syriac, though "rod' is rendered "tribe" in the last; and so it may be rendered, for {{שבט means a tribe as well as a rod or scepter: and this meaning is the most suitable. God was the portion of Israel, and Israel was the tribe or nation whom God inherited or possessed as his inheritance, there being no other nation so favored. --- Ed.

through Christ Jesus, until we shall at length enjoy thy full and perfect glory, when we shall be transformed into it in that inheritance, which has been purchased for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Forty-Second

Jeremiah 10:17-18

17. Gather up thy wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress.

17. Collige e terra merces tuas, quae habitas in munitione:

18. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once, and will distress them, that they may find it so.

18. Quia sic dicit Iehova, Ecce ego funda projiciens habitatores terrae vice hac, et coarctabo eos (vel, faciam ut obsideant eos) ut inveniant.

The first verse which we have recited, the Rabbins think, is addressed to the Chaldeans, but in my view very incorrectly. Jeremiah had indeed said that all the nations who devised gods of stone and of other corruptible materials, were very foolish; but we have seen for what purpose he said this, even to confirm the Israelites, who were captives, and in addition to the disgrace of exile were greatly hated by the Chaldeans and the Assyrians; it was, I say, to confirm them, lest they should depart from the true worship of God, but constantly defend the honor of their God, from whom they expected restoration. It is, therefore, absurd for the Rabbins to explain this verse of the Chaldeans; for the two verses ought to be connected, gather thy merchandise, because thus saith Jehovah It is then strange that these interpreters apply the second verse to the Israelites, while they read the first by itself, as though they were not connected: yet a reason is given why he bids all wages to be gathered.

But the meaning is simply this, --- that the whole country would be exposed to the will of their enemies, that they might plunder it: as then devastation was nigh at hand, the Prophet bids those in fortified places to gather their wages, or to gather a gathering, (we shall hereafter speak of this expression.) Now, we have already stated in several places, that the Prophets ironically touched on the torpidity of the people; for plain truth would have had no effect, except it was urged on them as it were vehemently The Prophet then undertakes the character of a man, who brings warlike tidings, as we shall more clearly see presently. But in this place, as in some other places, he declares that nowhere in Judea would there be safety, except in fortresses; which yet would not be able to resist the attacks of enemies, as we shall hereafter see.

As to the words, some give this rendering, ``gather* thy humiliation,'' as {כנע}cano, means to be humble; but they apply the words to Babylon, as though the Prophet had said, ``Now cease to subdue the remaining nations.'' Thus they take the verb {אסף} asaph,* in the sense of contraction, when some moderation is observed. But I have already said that this verse cannot refer to Babylon or to the Chaldeans. As then the Prophet addresses the Jews, and speaks of their effects, or of their merchandise, or precious things, which were wont to be gathered and laid up; as though he had said, ``Gather thy gathering;'' for the word {כנע} cano, means also to collect or to gather: and this is a suitable meaning, it being taken afterwards for doing business. But as to the subject itself there is no obscurity; for the Prophet

shews that in a short time the whole of Judea would be laid waste by enemies; and as it was to be exposed to plunder, what is usual was to be done, that is, to gather whatever was valuable into fortified cities. In short, the Prophet here declares that war and ruin would come on the Jews, which would extend through the whole land; for by land he means the country, as distinguished from fortified towns.

Then follows the reason, For thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will with a sling cast out the inhabitants of the land Land here is to be taken in another sense, even for the whole country. Wherever then the Jews dwelt, the Lord, says the Prophet, will draw them forth, yea, east them out as with a sling. We now then see that the vengeance which the Jews despised is denounced on them, because they remained securely in their own delusions; and what still more provoked God's wrath, they regarded all that Jeremiah said of his judgment as a fable. But he compares their violent exile to slinging, and represents the Lord as the slinger. We know that when a sling is flung and a stone is cast, the motion is very violent. Such a casting away is then what God here threatens the people with, --- that he would violently throw them here and there, like stones when cast by a sling.

And he says at this term or time, in order that the Jews might know that their calamity would be like a sudden storm. For they had often been subject to the assaults of enemies; but at one time they had delivered themselves, at another the Chaldeans and Assyrians had been constrained to turn aside to other quarters; or they had been miraculously delivered by God's aid. They hoped that it would be the same always; and they thought also that by protracting the war they could disappoint their enemies, as they had often done; and further still, they expected aid from various quarters. Hence the Prophet says, that they would be so taken away, that God would at once cast them all out of the land, and east them out as it were in one day: at this time they, will I fling out the inhabitants of the land

Then he says, And I will straiten them. Some render the verb transitively, as it is in Hiphil, ``I will cause them to be besieged by their enemies,'' and then, ``that their enemies may find them.'' But this seems forced. Others more correctly give this explanation of the last clause, ``that they may find,'' that is, as true, what had been so often foretold them. For, as we have said, the Prophets and their threatenings had been despised, as the Jews had hardened themselves in their impiety: therefore this interpretation may be allowed. But I prefer a more general meaning, --- that they may find, even what they had sought; for they had in many and various ways provoked the wrath of God: it was therefore right that they should at last find that which they had by their perverse doings procured for themselves, according to what is said in Isaiah 57:10,

``They shall find the fruit of their own ways.''

The Jews sought nothing less than the calamity which Jeremiah denounced on them: but they had really long sought it; for it was right that they should receive the wages due to their wickedness. Then it is, that they may find, that is, the reward of

their own works. [274] It follows ---

Jeremiah 10:19

19. Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it.

19. Hei mihi super contritione mea; dolore plena est percussio mea: et ego dixi, Certe (vel, utique) haec plaga mea, et feram eam.

The Prophet here no doubt speaks in the name of the whole people; for he saw that no one was moved by threatenings, though very grievous and severe; and this mode of speaking must be sufficiently known to us, for it is commonly used by all the prophets. They first, addressed the people; but when they saw that they produced no effect, in order to shew their indignation, they speak of themselves as in the presence of God: thus they rebuked the hardness and torpidity of men. So now does Jeremiah speak, Woe to me for my bruising! He did not grieve on his own account; but, as I have said, he represents the grief which the whole people ought to have felt, which yet they did not feel at all. As then they were so stupid, and proudly derided God and his threatenings, the Prophet shews to them, as it were in a mirror, what grievous and bitter lamentation awaited them.

We must then bear in mind that the Prophet speaks not here according to the feeling which the people had, for they were so stupified that they felt nothing; but that he speaks of what they ought to have felt, as though he had said, --- ``Were there in them a particle of wisdom, they would all most surely bewail their approaching calamity, before God begins to make his judgment to fall on their heads; but no one is moved: I shall therefore weep alone, but it is on your account.'' There is yet no doubt but he intended to try in every way whether God's threatenings would penetrate into their hearts.

He says that his smiting was full of pain; and then adds, And I said, Surely it is my stroke, and I will bear it. As I have already said, he does not relate what the Jews said or thought, but what would have been the case with them had they the smallest portion of wisdom. Some connect this with the following verse, as though the Prophet had said that he thought himself able to bear his grief, but was deceived, as he was at length constrained to succumb. But this is an incorrect view, and the passage runs better otherwise. The Prophet here reminds his own people with what feeling they ought to have regarded the fact, that God was angry with them; for he no doubt indirectly condemns their sottishness, because God's hand was put forth to chastise them, and yet they disregarded the hand of him who smote them. He then relates what they ought to have thought and felt, when God shewed tokens of

[274] As to these two verses the early versions all differ from one another, as well as from our version and that of Calvin. The Targum comes the nighest to our version. I offer the following rendering, — 17. Gather from the land thy gains, Thou who dwellest in a fortress! 18. For thus saith Jehovah, — Behold I will sling out The inhabitants of the land at this time, And will fortress them, that they may be taken. The first verse is spoken ironically, recommending what they were doing. Then the Lord says what he would do: They were gathering their goods into fortresses in order to secure them, and the Lord says that he would violently fortress (as the word means literally) or drive into fortresses all the inhabitants of the land, and would do so, that they might be found or taken, that is, captives; there would be no need of collecting the people, for they would be driven into fortified cities, where the enemies would find them. This seems to be the meaning of this verse, which Horsley deemed “very obscure,” and elucidated “by no expositor.” — Ed.

his wrath, --- that they ought to have acknowledged that it was their own stroke, and that it was therefore to be borne: for it is the best preparation for repentance when the sinner acknowledges that he is justly smitten, and when he willingly receives the yoke. When, therefore, any one proceeds thus far, his conversion is half effected.

The Prophet then teaches us here that the only remedy which remained for the Jews was to be fully convinced that they deserved the punishment which they endured, and then patiently to submit to God's judgment, according to what a dutiful son does who suffers himself to be chastised when he offends. The word is used in another sense in Psalm 77:10,

``To die is my lot.''

The Prophet has {חליו}, cheli, here; but there it is {חלותי} cheluti. That passage is indeed variously explained; but it seenis to be an expression of despair, when it is said, ``To die is my lot;'' that is, it is all over with me. But the Prophet here shews that it was the beginning of repentance, when the Jews confessed that they deserved their stroke; for no doubt there is here a comparison made between sin and its punishment, as though the Prophet had said, ``We have thus deserved, and God allots to us the reward due to our sins.'' It is one thing, --- to give glory to God, by confessing that he inflicts due punishment; but it is not sufficient unless patience be added, --- I will bear it; that is, I will submit to God. For there are many who, when convinced of their sins, do yet complain against their judge, and also raise a clamor. Hence the Prophet joins together these two things, --- the confession of sin and patience; so that they who experience the severity of God quietly submit to him as long as He exercises towards them the office of a judge. [275] He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 10:20

20. My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains.

20. Tabernaculum meum vastatum est (vel, dirutum) et omnes funes mei rupti sunt; filii mei egressi sunt a me (particula {ני} tantundem valet ac {ממני},) et nulli sunt (hoc est, nulli restant amplius:) nemo qui extendat amplius tabernaculum meum, et erigat (vel, disponat) cortinas meas.

This metaphor may have been taken from shepherds, and it seems suitable here; yet the prophets often compare the Church to a tent. Though indeed it is said elsewhere that the Church is built on the holy mountains, (Psalm 87:1) and great firmness is ascribed to it, yet, as to its external condition, it may justly be said to be like a tent, for there is no fixed residence for God's children on earth, for they are often

[275] Our translation, as to this verse, is nearly the Syriac. The Septuagint and Arabic have wandered much from the original; and so have the Vulgate and the Targum in some degree. The most literal is the version of Calvin. The terms here used, bruising, smiting, are commonly employed to designate great trouble and affliction, or distress; and this distress he describes in the verse that follows; and in the twenty-first verse the cause of it is set forth. And the distress corresponds with what he says in the eighteenth verse, where he says that the inhabitants would be driven from the land into fortresses, so that he would have none to set up his tent. All these verses seem connected. The literal rendering of this verse is as follows, — 19. Woe is to me, because of my bruising, (distress;) Grievous is my stroke; I have said, — Surely, this is grief! but I must bear it. Then he proceeds to state his distress: he had none even to assist him to pitch his tent, the people having all been driven to fortified cities. — Ed.

constrained to ehange their place; and hence Paul speaks of the faithful as unsettled. (1 Corinthians 4:11.) But as, in the next verse, mention is made of shepherds, the Prophet seems here to refer to the tents of shepherds. Though indeed he takes hereafter the similitude more generally, or in a wider sense, yet there is no reason why he should not allude to the shepherds of whom he afterwards speaks, and yet retain the metaphor which so often occurs in all the prophets.

He then says that his tent was pulled down, and that all his cords were broken Some take the tent for the city of Jerusalem, but this is a strained view, and unsuitable. We have already said that the Prophet speaks here in the name of the whole people; and it is the same as though he compared the people to a man dwelling with his family in a tent. He adds, My children are gone forth from me The people then complain that they were deprived of all their children; nor was this all, but they were scattered here and there, which was worse than if they had been taken away by death. He afterwards says, And there is no one to extend my tent, and to set up my curtains Jeremiah shews that the people would be so bereaved as to have none to bring them any assistance, though in much want of it.

No one then thought that such a thing would take place, and Jeremiah was held in contempt, and some raged against him, and yet He shewed what would be. And that what he said might be more forcible, and produce a stronger effect, he speaks in their name, like a poet in a play, who describes a miser, and mentions things suitable to his character, making use of such words and actions, so that he cannot but see, as it were in a mirror, his own disposition and conduct. So also the Prophet does here; for when He saw that the stupid people could not be moved by the simple truth, he told them what they all ought to have felt in their liearts, and to have testified by their mouths, --- that they were solitary, deserted by all who belonged to them, and that there was no one to bring them any help. [276] But he pursues, as we have said, the same metaphor. It follows ---

Jeremiah 10:21

21. For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.

21. Quia infatuati sunt pastores, et Jehovam non inquisierunt; propterea non egerunt prospere (alii, non intellexerunt,) et omnis pascua eorum (hoc est, quicquid in pascuis eorum erat) fuit destructum.

In the first place, he assigns a cause for the dreadful devastation of which he had spoken, and that was, because the shepherds were without thought and understanding. He still, as we see, goes on with his metaphor. Some confine this to the kings of Israel; but I do not agree with them: for I include under the name shepherds, the priests and the prophets as wen as the king and his counsellors. But Jeremiah did not mean to exempt the people from fault, when He, in an especial manner, accused the shepherds; but he only mentioned the origin and the primary cause of evils, -

[276] I should render the verse as follows — My tent, it is laid waste, And all my curtains, they are broken; My sons, they have left me, and there are none of them; No one extends any more my tent, and sets up my curtains. When the noun precedes its verb in Hebrew, I consider that it ought commonly to be rendered as above. “There are none of them,” that is, with me; not that they “were not,” that is, that they were dead. — Ed.

-- that the kings, the prophets, and the priests were blind, and thus destroyed the flock of God. We have observed elsewhere the same mode of speaking; and yet the prophets did not intend to extenuate the vices of the people, nor to absolve the lower orders. But as it mostly happens that the lower ranks, and those in humble stations, rely much on the chief men who occupy places of authority, it was necessary that the prophets should notice this evil: and we also know how nmch pride and arrogance there is in kings and priests, and in all those who elljoy any honor or dignity; for they think themselves exempt from the restraint of laws, and will not be reproved, as though they were sacred persons. It was, therefore, for this reason, that the Prophet reproved such with so much vehemence and severity. Hence, he says, The shepherds are infatuated

The people, indeed, at that time repudiated the prophets, as the case is now under the Papacy. For even when the truth of God is dearly and perspicuously set forth, there are many who set up this shield, --- that they believe their bishops, prelates, and kings, and others of a similar kind. When, therefore, Jeremiah saw that the pure truth of God was subverted by vain splendor, he found it necessary to expose the disguise, and, so to speak, to pull off the mask. It was, then, for this reason, that he said that the shepherds were infatuated. If the prophets were under this necessity, what ought to be done by us at this day, when we see that all those who unblushingly boast that they are the representatives of the Church are sheer impostors, and draw miserable souls into destruction? What else, I pray, ought to be done by us, but what we learn was done by the prophets? And how foolishly and childishly do the Papal bishops prattle, when they would have themselves exempted from all reproofs, because power and government is in their own hands! For they cannot surely assume to themselves more than what belonged formerly to the Levitical priests; for God had chosen them, and all the priests under the law might have justly boasted that they were appointed by divine authority: yet we see that they were reproved, and were said to be infatuated. The Pope and his bishops have not been appointed by God, nor have they any evidence of their calling. Though, then, they arrogate all things to themselves, and seem to do so by divine right, yet they cannot be deemed superior to the ancient priests: they must, therefore, become subject to the judgment which God denounces here by the mouth of his Prophet.

He gives a reason why they were infatuated, because they sought not Jehovah We hence see, on the other hand, that true wisdom is to seek God. When, therefore, there is no care taken to seek God, however acute men may be, they must necessarily be altogether infatuated: and it was for this reason that Jeremiah called them who had not sought God foolish or fatuitous. This passage teaches us, that the only way of governing rightly is, when they who rule strive to give glory to God, and regard him in all their thoughts and actions: but when they act otherwise, they must necessarily play the feel and become infatuated, however wise they may appear to be.

Hence he says, they have not prospered The verb {שכל}, shical, means to understand, and also to prosper. I see no reason for rendering it here, ``they have not understood'' or acted wisely; for it seems frigid, nor do I see what sense can

be elicited. But the Prophet may be considered to have justly said, that neither the kings and their counsellors, nor the priests and the prophets ruled with any success, because they sought not God; and that as they had no care for true religion, they were become infatuated. [277] And what follows confirms this view, And all that was in their pastures, etc.; for the Prophet seems here to add to his general statement a particular thing, and thus to prove that the government was unhappily conducted, being under the curse of God, because true religion had been neglected. He then adds this special thing, --- that the pastures had been deserted, that is, that the flock in the pastures had been wholly scattered. It follows ---

Jeremiah 10:22

22. Behold, the noise of the bruit is come, and a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons.

22. Vox rumoris, ecce venit, et strepitus (vel, tumultus) magnus (commotio, alii vertunt) e terra Aquilonis, ad ponendas urbes Jehudah in vastationem, domicilium draconum.

Jeremiah shews in this verse that prophetic doctrine was useless to an obstinate people; for there is a contrast, no doubt, to be understood betweenthe voice of God, which had constantly resounded in Judea, and the tumultuous clamours of enemies; for the prophets, one after another, had reproved the people, but without effect. Now, then, as they were deaf to God's voice, the Prophet declares that new teachers were now come who would address them in another way, and in an unusual manner. The voice then of rumor is heard; ``ye would not hear me and other servants of God; but a voice of rumor comes from the north: the Chaldeans shall be your teachers; I send you to their school, since I have spent my labor for many years in vain, as all those have done who before me diligently sought to lead you to the right way, whom God employed, and who faithfully endeavored to secure your safety; but they were no more attended to than I am, and therefore they ceased to teach you. I now turn you over to the Chaldeans; they shall teach you.'' This is the simple meaning.

The voice of rumor, he says, or literally, of hearing, {שמועה}, shimuoe, comes; that is, the voice which shall be heard, for they had closed their ears to the prophetic warnings; and a great tumult or commotion from the land of the north We now then see that the Chaldeans are set in opposition to the prophets, who had labored in vain among the Jews; as though Jeremiah had said that the Jews would, willing or unwilling, be made to attend to this tumultuous noise; and he says that it would be for the purpose of turning the cities of Judah to desolation and an habitation of

[277] The meaning of the verb {{שכל here is determined by the verb {בער} at the beginning of the verse: it is what is the reverse of that. Now {בער} is a verb derived from the name, which means a beast. To be like the beast is to be ignorant, stupid, void of reason and understanding: then {שכל} means here to act with knowledge, like one who possesses mind and reason. But then the shepherds did not act but like beasts who have no understanding. Then the verse may be thus rendered, --- 20. For stupidly-ignorant have become the shepherds, And Jehovah they have not sought; Therefore wisely have they not acted, And every one from their pastures is scattered. The ``scattering'' was from the land or country to the fortified towns, referred to in Jeremiah 10:18. They left the country, like sheep quitting their shepherds' pastures, and visited towns. Then, in the next verse, the Prophet says, that even the towns also would be destroyed. In the first instance God would terrify them, and fling them, as it were, from the land, so that they would take shelter in fortresses: this would be owing to the foolish conduct or their shepherds. They would be driven, then, that their enemies might more easily find or take them: and in the following verse he announces the approach of their enemies who were coming to lay waste their towns. All the versions give the idea of knowledge or wisdom to {שכל} here; but the Targum, that of prosperity. To act foolishly is what they all render the verb {בער} --- Ed.

dragons [278] It follows ---

Jeremiah 10:23

23. O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

23. Novi, Jehova, quod non sit penes hominem via ejus, non sit penes virum ambulantem, ut dirigat grassum suum.

The Jews confine this to Sennacherib, who had, according to his own will, at one time resolved to attack the Ammonites, at another the Moabites, and to reduce them under his own power; but had been induced by a sudden impulse to go to Judea. But this is frivolous. The Prophet, I doubt not, referred to the Jews, who had for a long time been accustomed to dismiss every fear, as though they were able by their own counsels to consult in the best way for the public good: for we know, that whenever any danger was apprehended from the Assyrians, they usually fled for aid to Egypt or to Chaldea. Thus, then, they provided for themselves, so tlmt they thought that they took good care of their affairs, while they had recourse to this or that expedient; and then, when the prophets denounced on them the vengeance of God, they usually regarded only their then present state, as though God could not; in one instant vibrate his lightnings from the rising to the setting sun.

Since then this security produced torpor and obstinacy, the Prophet in this passage justly exclaims, I know, Jehovah, that his way is not in man's power; nor is it in the power of a person walking to direct his steps [279]

We now perceive what the Prophet had in view; and this is ever to be remembered --- that if we desire to read what has been written with profit, we must consider the meaning intended by the Holy Spirit, and then the purpose for which he has spoken. When we understand these things, then it is easy to make the application to other things: but he who does not weigh the end in view, ever wanders here and there, and though he may say many things, he yet does not reach the chief point. [280] But we must observe that the Prophet, as he had done before, spoke as though he had God alone as his witness, for he saw that his own people were so hardened, that he addressed his words to them in vain: he therefore turned to God, which was a proof that he despaired as to the disposition of the people, as though he had said, ``I shall have nothing to do with this perverse people any more; for I have already found out by my experience that their perverseness is untameable. I am now therefore

[278] The verse may be thus rendered, — A sound is heard! — behold it comes, Even a great commotion, from the land of the North, To make the cities of Judah a desolation, The habitation of dragons. Blayney is right in taking the first words by themselves, but, “Hark, a voice!” is not a true version, {{שמועה is here a passive participle. --- Ed

[279] Literally rendered the verse is as follows: — I know, Jehovah, That not to a mortal is his way; Nor is it for man to walk And to stablish his steps. Such substantially is the meaning of the Targum, and of all the versions, except the Syriac, which Blayney has followed thus: I know Jehovah, that his way is not like that of men, Nor like a human being doth he proceed and order his going. This construction is wholly inadmissible. Had Jehovah been in the objective case, it would have {{את before it. See 1 Samuel 3:7. Then the rest of the verse is a paraphrase and not a version; and such a paraphrase as the original will not bear. To ``walk'' and to ``stablish'' are in the same predicament, both infinitives; and so they are rendered in all the versions and the Targum. The design of the passage seems to be more correctly intimated by Gataker than by Calvin: --- ``Lord, we know well, that this army cannot come in but by thy permission; but since thou art resolved to chastise us, we beseech thee, in wrath remember mercy.'' So in the next verse the Prophet says, ``O Lord, correct me, but with judgment.'' --- Ed.

[280] Or, as the French version has it, “does not reach the burden and knot of the subject.”

constrained, O Lord, to address thee as though I were alone in the world.'' This is the reason why he spoke to God himself. We shall defer the rest fill to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are in like manner at this day so torpid, that we are not moved by thy threatenings, nor do the kind and friendly warnings, by which thou invitest us to thyself, prevail with us, --- O grant that we may at length learn to attend to the truth, in whatever form thou settest it before us, and that we may be teachable and obedient, when thou only invitest us, and that if we become hardened, we may be also touched by thy threatenings, and not tempt thy patience, but suffer ourselves to be brought under thy yoke, and so submit to thee, that thou mayest through our whole life rule over us, and shew to us thy paternal love, so that, after having faithfully served thee in this world, we may come at length into that blessed rest which is prepared for us in heaven by Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Forty-Third

We stated yesterday why the Prophet exclaimed, that man's way is not in his own power: for as the sentence is brought in abruptly, it is made to signify different things. But I have briefly shewed that the Prophet condemns the security of his own people, because they thought that they were beyond the reach of danger, as they hoped for aid from neighboring nations in league with them, or because they supposed that they had sufficient help and protection in their own resources. Hence the Prophet derides this foolish confidence, and says, that his way is not in the power of man, and that it is not in the power of man while walking to direct his steps

It must be farther noticed, that he treats not here of counsels, but that though men wisely guided their affairs, the Prophet denies that the issue is in their own hands or at their own will: and hence he expressly speaks of a man walking He concedes that men walk, but yet he intimates that they cannot move a foot, except they receive strength from God. We now then perceive what the Prophet had in view.

We may hence gather a general truth --- that men greatly deceive themselves, when they think that fortune or the issue of events is in their own hands: for though they may consult most wisely, yet things will turn out unsuccessfully, unless God blesses their counsels. And this is what we ought carefully to notice, because we see how presumptuously men promise themselves this and that; and this presumption can hardly be arrested while men arrogate to themselves what belongs peculiarly to God alone. There are many warnings given in Scripture in order to check this rashness; but almost all proceed in their own course, and cannot, be induced to allow themselves to be ruled by God. James condemns this madness [281] when he says, that men resolve what they would for a long time do: the merchant determines on a long voyage, not only for three or four months, but for many years; another undertakes war; another ventures to take this or that business in hand; in short, there is no end to such instances. The Holy Spirit has by this one passage checked the boldness of those who claim for themselves more than they ought: but the greater part, as I have already said, think that the event is in their own power. On this account

[281] James 4:13.

Solomon says, [282] that man deliberates, but that it is God who governs the tongue. He had said in the former clause, that it is man who sets in order his ways; but he said this ironically, as it is what most believe; fortwhen they undertake anything, they are not so solicitous about the event, but they always promise to themselves more than what they have a right to do. Men, he says, set in order or arrange their ways, but God governs the tongue; that is, they cannot speak a word unless the Lord lets loose the bridle of their tongues; and yet we know that many things are vainly said by men, for they are never accomplished. Since then the voice itself is not in the power of man, but depends on the will of God, what ought we to think of the issue?

We now then see the truth which may be learnt from this passage, --- that men deceive themselves when they dare to undertake this or that business, and promise themselves a happy issue. But we must farther observe, that not only events are at the disposal of God, but counsels also; for God directs the hearts and minds of men as it seemeth him good. But all things are not said in every passage. The Prophet does not here avowedly speak of what men can do, but grants this to them --- that they consult, that they decide; yet he teaches us that the execution is not in their own power.

Some foolishly elicit from this passage, that something belongs to man, that he possesses some power of free-will. There seems indeed to be here something plausible at the first view. Jeremiah says, that his way is not in man's power, and that it is not in the power of him who walks to direct his steps; he then, it is said, has left something to manm he walks; it hence follows that free --- will is not reduced to nothing, but that a defect is proved, for man of himself has no sufficient power unless he is helped from above. These are only puerile trifles; for, as we have said, the Prophet does not shew here what are the powers of free-will, and what power man has to deliberate, but he takes this as granted; yet the children of this world, though they seem to themselves to be very acute in all things, and take their own counsels, and rely on their own resources, are yet deceived, because God can in one moment dissipate all their hopes, as the events of things are wholly in his power. It is therefore by way of concession that he says that man walks, according to what Paul says in Romans 9:16, though in that passage he ascends higher; yet in saying, that it is not of him who wills nor of him who runs, he seems to concede to men the power of willing and running. But there is to be understood here a species of irony; for we know that men can never be stripped of that vain and deceptive conceit which fills them, while they think that they can obtain righteousness by their own strength. They dare not, indeed, actually to boast that they are the authors of their own salvation, and that righteousness is within their own power, but they wish to be associates with God. Though they admit him as a partner, they yet wish to divide with him. This is the folly which Paul ridicules; and he says, that it is not of him who wills, or of him who runs, but of God only who shews mercy; that is, that man's salvation is alone from the mercy of God, and that it is not from the toil and running of man.

[282] Proverbs 16:1.

When the Pelagians sought by this cavil to evade the sentence of Paul, ``It is not of him who wills and runs,'' deducing hence, that man has some liberty to will and to run, Augustine said wisely, ``If it be so, then, on the other hand, we may infer, that it is not of God who shews mercy, but of him who wills and runs.'' [283] How so? If men co-operate in half with God, and if there is a concurrence of human power with the grace and aid of the Holy Spirit, and if this sentence, ``It is not of him who wills, or of him who runs,'' is true according to the sense given to it, so we may also say, that it is not only of God who shews mercy, but also of him who wills and runs. Why? Because the mercy of God is not sufficient if it is to be aided by man's power. But this is extremely absurd, and there is no one who does not abhor the thought, that man's salvation is not from God's mercy, but from their willing and running. It then follows, that all human power, and all lab ours, are wholly excluded by these words of Paul.

Now, the Prophet does not speak of eternal salvation, but only of the actions of the present life. As then the Israelites thought that they had sufficient protection in their own wisdom, in their own power, in their own nmnbers, and also in their confederacies with other nations, the Prophet says, that they were deceived, for they arrogated to themselves the ruling power, which belongs to God alone; for what men commonly call fortune is nothing else but God's providence. Since then God by his hidden counsel governs the affairs of men, it follows that all events, prosperous or adverse, are at his will. Whatever, then, men may consult, determine, and attempt, they yet can execute nothing, for God gives such an issue as he pleases.

We now see what the Prophet speaks of, and also see that he touches not on the powers of free-will; for he does not refer here to man's will, but only shews that after men have arranged their affairs in the best manner, all their counsels, strivings, and toils come to nothing, and that God disappoints their confidence, because they dare rashly to promise to themselves more than what is right. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 10:24

24. O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.

24. Castiga me, Jehova, tantummodo in judicio, non in ira tua, ne imminuas me.

The Prophet again indirectly reproves and condemns the stupor of the people, because he saw that all his threatenings were despised. They had indeed been often punished, and they thought that they had escaped; and though an extreme calamity was approaching, they yet supposed that God was far from them; and thus they cherished their own delusions. Hence the Prophet alone personates the whole people, and undertakes a common and public lamentation. Chastise me, Jehovah, he says, but in judgment The Prophet doubtless is not here solicitous about his own safety only, nor does he plead his own private cause, but he supplicates for the whole people.

But why does he speak of himself alone? Because he personated, as I have already said, the whole community, and thus reproved them for their insensibility, because they were not more attentive to the approaching judgment of God. In short,

[283] Epist. 107, ad Vitalem.

the Prophet here teaches them how they must all have felt, were they not wholly blinded and, as it were, given up to a reprobate mind;. and thus he shews, that the only thing that remained for them was suppliantly to ask pardon from God, and that they were not wholly to refuse all chastisement, but to supplicate forgiveness only in part, even that God would not exercise such severity as altogether to consume them. In this way he shews how atrocious were the sins of the people; for they were not simply and unreservedly to ask God to pardon them, but only to moderate his vengeance. When any one sins lightly, he may flee to God's mercy, and say, ``Lord, forgive me!'' but they who have accumulated evils on evils, and after having been often warned have not repented, as though they purposely sought to arm God against themselves and to their own ruin, --- can such seek entire exemption from all punishment? This would not be meet nor reasonable.

The Prophet then shews here briefly, that the Jews had so far advanced in wickedness that God would not wholly forgive them, and that they were not to seek pardon without any chastisement, but only to ask of God, as I have said, to moderate his severity. David did the same thing, though he pleaded his own cause only, and not that of the people. He deprecated God's wrath and indignation; he sought not to be so forgiven as to feel no chastisement; but as he dreaded God's wrath he wished it to be in a measure averted. And hence, in another place, he thanks God that he had been lightly smitten by his hand,

``Chastising, the Lord has chastised me,
but doomed me not to death.'' (Psalm 118:18)

But this ought to be especially observed as to the words of Jeremiah, --- that the people ought not to have asked pardon unless they submitted to God's chastisement, for they had most grievously and perversely sinned.

We may hence also gather a general truth: the real character and nature of repentance is, to submit to God's judgment and to suffer with a resigned mind his chastisement, provided it be paternal. For when God deals with us according to strict justice, all hope of salvation is extinguished, so that it cannot be that we shall from the heart repent. Let us then know that this is necessary in repentance --- that he who has offended God should present himself willingly, and of his own accord, before his tribunal and bear his chastisement. For they who are so delicate and tender, that they cannot endure any of his scourges, seem to be still refractory and rebellious. Wherever, then, there is the true feeling of penitence, there is this submission connected with it, --- that God should chastise him who has offended. But a moderation is needed, according to the promise,

``I will chastise them, but with the hand of man; for my mercy will I not take away from them.'' (2 Samuel 7:14;
Psalm 89:33, 35)

This was God's promise to Solomon; but we know that it belongs to all the members of Christ. Though then God indiscriminately punishes the sins of the whole world, there is yet a great difference between the elect and the reprobate, for God grants this privilege to his elect, --- that he chastises them paternally as his children, while he deals with the reprobate as a severe judge, so that all the punishments

which they endure are fatal, as they cannot see anything but God's wrath in their judgments. The elect also have ever a reason for consolation, for they know God to be their Father; and though they may at first shun his wrath, and being smitten with terror, seek some hiding places, yet having afterwards a taste of his kindness and mercy they take courage; and thus their punishments, though much more grievous than those endured by the reprobate, are yet not fatal to them, for God turns them to remedies. We now then see what is the use and benefit of what the Prophet teaches, when he says, Chastise me, Jehovah, but only in judgment

Judgment is to be taken here for moderation. The word {משפט} meshepheth, has indeed various meanings: but it is to be regarded here as signifying a measured portion; not that God ever exceeds due limits in inflicting punishment, but because men faint when he exercises rigor, as then there appears to them no hope of pardon. When God therefore executes only the office of a Judge, men must necessarily faint altogether: so Jeremiah means, that there would be no measured dealing, that is, that God's judgment would not be endurable, except he dealt mercifully with him. [284] There is also set in opposition to this another clause, not in fury, or, not in wrath. Here then the want of moderation or excess is not opposed to a measured proportion, but the wrath of God. We also know that no passions belong to God; but, when God's wrath or rigour appears, men must necessarily not only be terrified, but be also reduced to nothing: and yet in many places we read that` God is angry with his elect and the whole Church: but, this is to be referred to the outward appearance; for it is certain that the punishments with which God visits his own children are evidences of his paternal love, as in this way he promotes their salvation. Hence the Apostle says, that they are bastards whom God does not favor with any correction. (Hebrews 12:8.) But yet as to the outward appearance, the punishments which God inflicts on his elect differ nothing from those by which he manifests his wrath, and which he executes on the reprobate. Therefore it is by a sort of impropriety in language that punishments are always said to be evidences and signs of God's wrath, and that God is said to be angry with his Church. But the Prophet speaks here strictly correct when he sets God's wrath in opposition to his judgment, that. is, to that moderation which he exercises towards his elect, when he withholds his hand, which would otherwise overwhelm them in an instant.

Hence he subjoins, Lest thou shouldest diminish them By diminishing he means destruction: as in many other places. It could not be otherwise but that God should diminish us, were he only to touch us with the end of his finger, as we know how dreadful is his power: nor is there any need for him to thunder from heaven, but were he only to shew an angry countenance, it would be all over with us. But the Prophet takes diminution here for demolition. We hence see that he so subjects himself and the whole people to God's chastisement as yet to seek some moderation; for

[284] The word judgment, though usually given as the version of the original word, does not convey its meaning here. Of the twelve senses mentioned by Johnson as belonging to the word judgment, not one of them is applicable to this place. There is perhaps not a word in any language which includes all the ideas conveyed by a word of a similar general import in another. The word {משפט} is rendered in our version, ``judgment,'' Exodus 23:6, --- ``manner,'' 1 Samuel 27:11, --- ``custom,'' 1 Samuel 2:13, --- ``ordinance,'' Isaiah 58:2, --- ``due,'' Deuteronomy 18:3, --- ``right,'' Deuteronomy 21:17, --- ``measure,'' Jeremiah 30:11; the last is in the sense of moderation; and this is its meaning here; or, it may be rendered, ``due measure.'' Chastise me, Jehovah, but yet in moderation; Not in thy wrath, lest thou diminish me, or, render me small. --- Ed.

otherwise God's rigor would have consumed them all, from the least to the greatest, according to what is also said by Isaiah,

``I have tried thee, but not as gold and silver, for thou wouldest have been consumed.'' (Isaiah 48:10)

God then so deals with miserable sinners, that he regards what they can bear, and not what they deserve. This is simply what the Prophet means. [285]

But we may hence learn, that there is no one who can bear the strict rigour of God; and that therefore our only asylum is his mercy; not that he may pardon us altogether: for it is good for us to be chastised by his hand; but that he may chastise us only according to his paternal kindness. It follows ---

Jeremiah 10:25

25. Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.

25. Effunde iram tuam super gentes, quae te non noverunt, et super cognationes (vel, familias) quae nomen tuum non invocaverunt; quia comederunt Jacob, comederunt inquam ipsum, et consumpserunt eum, et tabernacula ejus vastarunt.

The Prophet confirms his prayer by this reason --- that God had sufficient ground for executing his vengeance on the wicked and ungodly heathens who were alienated from him; and there is no doubt but that he had respect to the promise to which we have referred; for the Prophet knew that what had been said once to David was promised to the whole Church throughout all ages. Hence He reminds God, as it were, of the difference which he had made between domestics and foreigners; as though he had said, ``O Lord, though it is right and also useful for our salvation to be chastised by thy hand, yet thou dost not indiscriminately visit with vengeance the sins of men; for thou hast promised paternally to chastise thy children: but as to aliens, thou art their judge, so that they may be wholly destroyed. Now then, O Lord, shew that this has not been said in vain; and as thou hast been pleased to adopt us as thy peculiar people, forgive us according to thy paternal kindness.'' Hence we see that the Prophet did not inconsiderately pour forth his prayer into the air, but had a regard to God's promise, and referred to that difference which God himself was pleased to make between his Church and unbelievers.

He then says, Pour forth thy wrath on the nations who know not thee: and he exaggerates what he says by adding, that Jacob had been devoured by these heathen nations as by wild beasts; as though he had said, ``We have indeed sinned, O Lord; but (lost thou shew thyself to be the Judge of the world for our destruction, and yet sparest the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Chaldeans, who have so cruelly

[285] The Septuagint and Arabic render this verse as though spoken by the people, "chastise us," etc., and the last clause, "lest thou make us few." The Targum has, "chastise them," and, "lest they be diminished." These are interpretations and not versions. The Vulgate and the Syriac render the Hebrew literally, "chastise me," and the last clause, "lest thou reduce me to nothing," or, according to the Syriac, "to a small number," which is literally the original; and this verb clearly shews that this verse was spoken, as Calvin observes, in the name of the people: but diminution, and not destruction, is meant, as the verb has never the latter meaning. Hence our version is wrong, and also Blayney's, "lest thou crush me to atoms." Diminution, and not annihilation, is what the word means; and this diminution was one of the judgments that would come upon them in case of disobedience, as mentioned by Moses, Leviticus 26:22. — Ed.

distressed us, yea, who have not only torn us, but have also wholly devoured us? (For he uses the word devour twice; and then he adds, They have consumed him; and lastly, His tents have they laid waste) Since then they have so atrociously raged against thy people, are they to go unpunished, when thou castest us down, who are thine? Even had we given thee ever so great a cause for punishing us, still thine adoption should avail us; and thou mightest in the meantime execute thy judgment on the heathen nations.''

There is no doubt but that the Prophet, or whoever he was who composed the seventy-ninth Psalm, borrowed the words used here, for it is there said,

``Pour forth thy wrath on the nations who know not thee, and on the kingdoms which have not called on thy name; for they have consumed Jacob and his inheritance.'' (Psalm 79:6, 7)

It may be that Jeremiah himself wrote that Psalm, after having been driven into Egypt, when that city had been destroyed. It was, however, suitable to the time when dreadful scattering had happened; for the Psalm seems to have been composed for the benefit of the miserable, and as it were of the lost Church. It is yet more probable that it was written under the tyranny of Antiochus, or at the time when the cruelty of God's enemies raged against his people. However this may be, the author of that Psalm wished to repeat what is contained here.

It may now be asked, Whether it is right to pray for evils on the ungodly and wicked, while we are doubtful and uncertain as to their final doom. For as God has not made it known how he purposes to deal at last with them, the rule of charity ought on the contrary to turn us another way, --- that we are to hope for their salvation and to pray God to forgive them: but the Prophet; consigns them only to destruction; and he speaks not according to his own private feeling, but dictates a prayer which all the faithful were to use. To this I answer, --- that we are not to denounce a sentence on this or that man individually, and that our prejudging would be presumptuous, were we to consign individuals to eternal death and to pray for evil on them: but we may use this form of prayer generally with regard to the obstinate enemies of God, so as still to refer to him the certainty of the issue; and yet we are not to mix in one mass all those whom we know to be now ungodly, for this, as I have said, would be presumptuous It would then be more becoming in us to pray for the good of all and to wish their salvation, and, as far as we can, to promote it. Yet when we thus entertain love towards every individual, we may still so pray in general, that God would lay prostrate, consume, scatter, and reduce to nothing his enemies. There is then no doubt but that the Prophet here turns his own thoughts to God's judgment, as though He had said, ``Lord, it was thy work to make a distinction between domestics and aliens; it has pleased thee to adopt this people; what now remains, but that thou shouldest deal mercifully with them, inasmuch as thou sustainest towards them the character of a Father? As to the heathen nations, as they are aliens to thee and belong not to thy flock, destruction awaits them; let them therefore perish.''

Now the Prophet in thus speaking of heathen nations, does not anticipate God's judgment so as to restrain him from doing what he pleased: but he only mentions, as I have already said, what he derived from God's word, --- that some are elected,

and that others are reprobates. He infers God's election from his vocation or his covenant; and, on the other hand, he regards all those reprobate on whom God has not been pleased to bestow the privilege of his paternal favor.

The question then is now solved: and hence it appears how it is lawful for us to pray for the destruction of the reprobate, and of those who despise God, --- that our prayers ought not to anticipate God's judgment, --- and that we are not to determine as to individuals, but only remember this distinction --- that God acts as a Father towards his elect, and as a judge towards the reprobate.

Pour forth then thy wrath: as he had subjected himself and the whole people to God's chastisements, so he says, Pour forth thy wrath; that is, deal with them with strict justice; but yet moderate thy wrath towards us, lest like the deluge it should swallow us up; for the word ``pour forth'' conveys this meaning. By saying, on the nations which know not thee, which have not called on thy name, he uses words which ought to be carefully noticed; for we are by them taught that the beginning of religion is the knowledge of God. He then mentions the fruit or the effect, which is invocation or prayer. These two things are connected together: but we must bear in mind the order also; for God cannot be invoked, except the knowledge of him previously shines on us. Indeed all everywhere call on God; even the unbelieving commonly cry on him when urged by danger; but they do not rightly address their prayers to him, nor offer them as legitimate sacrifices. How so? How can they call on him,'' says Paul, ``in whom they have not believed?'' Hence it is necessary, as I have said, that God himself should shew us the way before we can rightly pray: and therefore where there is no knowledge of God, there can be no way of praying to him. But when God has once given us light, then there is a way of access open to us. Invocation then is ever the fruit of faith, as it is an evidence of religion; for all who call not on God, and that seriously, prove that they have never known anything of religion. If then we desire to pray aright, we must first learn what is God's will towards us: we must also know that we then only advance as we ought in the attainment of salvation, when we flee to God and exercise ourselves in prayer.

He lastly adds, For they have consumed Jacob, they have consumed him, they have consumed him, [286] and his tents have they laid waste. Two things are to be observed here: we see how sad and miserable was the state of the Church; for he says not that the Israelites had suffered many wrongs, or had been treated violently and reproachfully, but that they had been devoured by the nations, and he repeats this twice; and then he adds, that they had been consumed, and that their tents had been laid waste. Since then we see how cruelly afflicted were God's children formerly, let us not wonder if the Church at this day be exposed to the most grievous calamities, and let us not be frightened as though it was something new and unusual; but as the same thing happened formerly to our fathers, let us bear such trials with

[286] Blayney for no good reason has omitted the verb "consumed," following the Septuagint and one MS. The Vulgate, the Syriac, and the Targum, retain the two verbs. So far is the last verb from being without meaning, as this author says, that it has an especial emphasis, it being stronger than the preceding verb, — 24. Pour forth thine indignation on the nations, Who know not thee, and on the families, Who on thy name have not called; For they have devoured Jacob, Yea, they have devoured him and consumed him, And his habitation have they made desolate. — Ed.

a submissive mind. The other thing to be observed is, --- that as the Prophet was not here led to pray by the impulse of his flesh, but by the guidance of the Spirit, we may hence with certainty conclude, that though the enemies of the Church triumph at this day, and think that they have everything in their own power, while they cruelly treat the innocent, they shall at length be punished; for the Spirit who guided the tongue of the Prophet intended this form of prayer to be unto us like a promise, so that we may feel assured that the more atrociously the ungodly rage against God's children, the heavier punishment is nigh them as the wages of their cruelty. They indeed devour, at this day, like wild beasts; but God will sooner or later put forth his hand, and shew how precious to him is the blood of his people.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since we are so torpid in our sins, except thou rousest us, that we profit not by the severe warnings by which thou didst formerly stimulate thine ancient people, and since we have also been already warned by many signs of thy wrath to seek repentance with increasing assiduity, --- O grant that we may earnestly persevere in this course, and so submit to thee, that with patient and calm minds we may bear thy corrections: and may we in the meantime be fully assured that thou wilt ever be our Father, and never hesitate, even in death itself, to flee to thy mercy, until thou pourest forth thy wrath on the ungodly and the profane despisers of thy name, and shewest such compassion towards us, that we may know that thou hast not in vain promised that thy chastisements would ever be kind and paternal, in visiting the sins of those who hope in thee, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Chapter 11

Lecture Forty-Fourth

CHAPTER 11

Jeremiah 11:1-5

1. The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

1. Sermo qui directus fuit ad Jeremiah a Jehova, dicendo,

2. Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem;

2. Audite verba (sermones) foe-deris hujus, et dicite viro Jehudah (viris Jehudah, enallage est numeri) et habitatoribus Jerusalem;

3. And say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant,

3. Et dices ad cos, Sic dicit Jehova, Deus Israel, Maledictus vir qui non audierit verba foederis hujus;

4. Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God:

4. Quae (vel, quod foedus) mandavi patribus vestris die quo eduxi eos e terra Egypti, e fornace ferrea, dicendo, Audite vocem meam, et facite ea quae (hoc est, quaecunque) praecipio (relativum sine antecedente; seeundum omnia quae praecepi vobis) et eritis mihi in populum, et ego ero vobis in Deum; (cohoerent hoecomnia inter se, ideo non disjungo)

5. That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O LORD.

5. Ut statuam (vel, stabiliam; alii vertunt, suscitem, sed improprie) jusjurandum quodjuravipatribus vestris ad dandum illis terrain afltuentem lacte et roelie, secundum diem hanc: et respondi et dixi, Amen, Jehova.

Here the Prophet teaches us, that the Jews, though they continued to profess God's holy name, were yet wholly perfidious, and had departed altogether from the law. The import of this discourse is, that the Jews gloried in the name of God, and yet were violaters of his covenant, for they had broken their faith pledged to God, and wholly cast aside the doctrine of the law. The Jews, no doubt, were often greatly exasperated against Jeremiah, as though he was pleading his own cause: it was therefore necessary to set before them their departure from the law, so that they might feel assured that their contention was not with Jeremiah but with Moses, and with God himself, the author of the law. They were doubtless exasperated with his doctrine; but Jeremiah could not spare them when he saw that they were so perverse.

We may understand this better by an example: Though the Papists at this day openly repudiate everything adduced from the law, and the prophets, and the gospel, yet they dissemble on this point, and even affirm that they receive whatever proceeds from God. As they then shuffle and do so shamelessly, he who seeks to restore the pure worship of God and true religion, may deal with them in the same manner. As for instance, when any one of God's servants meets the Papists, he may thus address them: --- ``Let not the dispute be now between us individually, but hear what God commanded formerly by Moses, and what he has more fully confirmed by his prophets, and at last by his only --- begotten Son and his apostles; so that it is not right to do anything any longer against his word: now then attend to the law and the prophets.''

We now understand what was God's design in bidding his servant Jeremiah to speak these words. For, except we duly consider the unfaithfulness of that people, we shall feel surprised that the word covenant is so often mentioned, and it will appear unmeaning to us. But the Prophet, as I have said, when he saw that the Jews by their cavils made evasions, could not deal with them in any other way than by shewing that, they had violated God's covenant and had thus become apostates, having wholly departed from the law. And he says that this was commanded them by God: nor is there doubt but that God not only suggested this to his servant, but dictated also to him the way and manner of speaking.

Rightly then does Jeremiah begin by saying, that this word was given to him. By using the plural number in the second verse, he no doubt shews that he had a few assistants remaining, whom God addressed in connection with him, that they might unite together in delivering his message. For though there were very few good men, yet Jeremiah was not wholly deprived of colleagues, who assented to and confirmed his doctrine. Baruch was one of them, and there were a few like him. These, then, God addresses in the second verse, when he says, Hear ye the words of this coveant, and say ye [287] to the men of Judah and to the citizens of Jerusalem Jeremiah indeed

[287] So the Vulgate and the Targum, but the Septuagint, the Syriac, and Arabic, have the verb in the singular number, "and thou shalt say." The {{ם at the end of the verb may be rendered ``them;'' so Blayney regards it. We may consider the end of this verse and the following as parenthetic; otherwise the particle ``this'' seems singular. It will thus appear to be ``this covenant which I commanded your fathers.'' Still the whole passage seems not to run well. I am disposed to render ,{הזאת} ``even these,'' and to put a part in a parenthesis, thus, --- 2. Hear ye the words of the covenant, even these, (and thou shalt speak them to every man of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, 3. and thou shalt say to them, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel,) 4. ``Cursed is the man who hearkens not to the words of the covenant, even these, which I commanded your fathers in the day I brought them up from the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, ``Hearken to my voice, and do ye according to all that I shall command thee; and ye shall be to me a people, 5. and I shall be to you a God; that

knew, and also those who were with him, that they brought forward nothing but what was in the law: but however conscious they were of their own sincerity, and could testify before God and his angels that they drew nothing from puddles but from a pure fountain, yet God intended to strengthen them against the contumacy of the people; for they had this objection ready at hand, ``Ye indeed boast that whatever it pleases you to bring forward, is the word of God; but this we deny.'' Since then the prophets had to undergo such a contest, it seemed good to God to strengthen their hands, that they might first be themselves assured, and then become fit and bold witnesses of his truth to others, having good authority, as it was derived from the law itself, and not from the devices of men.

And we see to whom God intended this to be proclaimed, even to the men of Judah and to the citizens of Jerusalem The ten tribes, as it has elsewhere appeared, were now driven into exile; and here was the flower, as it were, of the chosen people; and having survived so many calamities, they thought that they had been preserved by Divine power, because religion and God's worship prevailed among them. Thus they were inebriated with false notions and self --- flatteries. Hence the Prophet, and those who were with him, are expressly bidden to declare, what we shall hereafter notice, to the citizens of Jerusalem and to the inhabitants of the land who remained, and thought that they were the chosen of God and would continue safe, even if all others were to perish.

The Prophet afterwards shews more clearly that the command was especially given to him, for he uses the singular number, Thou shalt say to them Nor is it inconsistent that at first he joined others with himself; for God might have united the suffrages of the few who wished the restoration of pure religion among the people, while yet Jeremiah, who was superior to the rest, sustained the chief part. There is no doubt but that others were anxious by their consent to confirm his doctrine: but there was no emulation among them; and though he excelled them, he yet winingly admitted into a connection with himself all those whom he found to be united with him in so good and holy a cause. God then, in the last verse, spoke of them in common, for he wished all his servants to add their testimony to that of his Prophet; but now he addresses the Prophet alone, for his authority was greater.

It follows, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, cursed the man who does not hearken to the words of this covenant As often as the word covenant is mentioned, Jeremiah no doubt cuts off every pretext for all those evasions to which the Jews, according to what we have said, had recourse: for they never winingly allowed that they took away anytiling from the law, though they yet despised Jeremiah, who was its true and faithful interpreter, who had blended with it nothing of his own, but only applied what had been taught by Moses to the condition of the people at that time. There is then to be understood an implied contrast between the word covenant and the doctrine of Jeremiah; not that there was any difference or contrariety, or that Jeremiah had anything apart from the law, but that he formed his discourse so as to suit the condition of the people. And there is a kind of concession, as though he had said, ``I do not now demand to be heard by you, but hear only the law itself: I have

I may confirm the oath which I have sworn to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day.'' --- And I answered and said, Amen, O Jehovah. --- Ed.

hitherto brought forward nothing but what God has commanded; and I have taught nothing at variance with Moses; there has been nothing additional in my doctrine: but as I cannot convince you of this, I now give over speaking to you; Moses himself speaks, hear him.''

By adding the pronoun demonstrative, ``Hear ye the words of this covenant,'' it is the same as though he had openly shewed them as by his finger, so that there was no room for any doubt. [288] He then upbraided them by pointing out the covenant, as though he had said, ``What avails you to feign and to pretend that what we say is ambiguous, and to hold it as uncertain whether we are or not the servants of God? whether we speak by his Spirit? whether he himself has sent us? The thing is clear; this is the covenant.'' We now perceive the force of this pronoun.

But in referring to the curse, his purpose, no doubt, was to bend the stubbornness of the people. Had the Jews been teachable and submissive, God would have used a milder strain, and allured them by words of kindness and love: but as he had to do with perverse minds, he was under the necessity of addressing them in this manner, in order to strike them with terror, and to render them more attentive, and also to make them to hear with more reverence, as they usually treated with contempt what he had spoken before. We hence see why he began with mentioning a curse. God followed in the law another order; for he first introduced the rule of life, and added also promises to render the people wining to obey; and then he subjoined the curses. But Jeremiah here begins by saying, Cursed are all those who hear not the words of this covenant Why was this done? Even because he had already found out the hardness and the obstinate wickedness of the people. He then does not propound a simple doctrine, but before all things he sets before them the curse of God; as though he had said, ``It is very strange that you have not hitherto been moved, since God's curse has been so often denounced on you: as then ye are so stupid, before I begin to speak of God's commands, his curse shall be mentioned to awaken your torpidity.''

But we learn from the Prophet's words that he alluded to the form prescribed in the law: for after Moses rehearsed all the precepts, he added, ``Cursed is every one who turns aside to foreign gods;'' and he commanded the people to respond, Amen; and, ``Cursed is every one who curses father and mother,'' and he bade them to respond, Amen; and after having narrated all the precepts, he added, ``Cursed is every one who fulfils not all the words of this law,'' and the people responded, Amen. (Deuteronomy 27:15, 16, 26) The same form does Jeremiah now adopt when he says,

``Declare then to the people, that they are all accursed who obey not my precepts;''

and then the Prophet adds, I answered and said, Amen, O Jehovah But it must be observed, that the Prophet here personates as before the whole people; as though he had said, ``I subscribe to God's judgment, even though ye should be all gainsayers, as ye really are. Though then ye think that ye can escape from God's hand, as though

[288] Gataker says, “It is not unlikely that the Prophet held out the book or volume of the law, wherein the covenant was engrossed and recorded, then in his hand.” — Ed.

it were easy to elude the curse which is pronounced in his law, yet I subscribe with my own name, and answer before God, Amen, O Jehovah

But we must notice also the other words, Cursed, he says, is every one who hears not the words of this covenant To hear, in this place, and in many other places, is to be taken for obeying. He then speaks of the words or of the covenant itself; for the expression may be taken in either sense, as God had made a covenant with the Jews and at the same time expressed words. I am inclined to consider the covenant itself as intended. God then says that he had made a covenant with them. There is yet a fuller explanation, The words which I commanded your fathers, he says, in the day when I brought them up from the land of Egypt, God shews here by a circumstance as to the time how inexcusable the Jews were; for he says that he gave the law to their fathers at the very time when they were extricated from death; as they were drawn out of the grave, as it were, when God made them a passage through the Red Sea. That redemption ought to have made such a deep impression as to convince them wholly to devote themselves to God; yea,, the memory of such a benefit ought to have been deeply fixed in their hearts.

We hence see how aggravated here is the sin of ingratitude; for the law was given to the Israelites when they had before their eyes the many deaths to which they had been exposed, and from which the Lord had miraculously delivered them. For the same reason also he mentions their miserable state as an iron furnace, according to what we find in the third chapter of Exodus and in many other places, he then compares their Egyptian bondage to a furnace; for the Jews were then like wood and straw in a burning furnace; and he calls the furnace iron, as it could melt and reduce to nothing things harder than wood, evcn gold or silver or any other metal. In short, the deplorable state of the people is here set forth; and the Prophet, by the comparison, magnifies the favor shewn to them --- that God, beyond all hope, had delivered them from death. Since then the authority of the law was sanctioned by so great a benefit, it became evident how much was the impiety of the people, and how unbecoming and wicked their ingratitude; for they did not winingly suffer God's yoke to be laid on them.

He says that God commanded these things This expression, as I have said, is to be applied to the words of the law, and not to the covenant. But the Prophet speaks indiscriminately, now of the covenant, then of the things it embraces, that is, of all the precepts it includes. In other words, he expresses how inexcusable was the sin of the people; for God, in substance, required of them no other thing but to hear his voice: and what can be more just than that they who have been redeemed should obey the voice of their deliverer? and what could have been more detestable and monstrous than for the Israelites to refuse what God had a right to demand? We now then perceive the design of the Prophet in saying, that God commanded this only to his redeemed people, even to hear his voice, and to do what he commanded. [289]

He further adds a promise, which ought to have softened their stony hearts, Ye

[289] There is no need of any alteration in the text, as proposed by some: the literal rendering is, "Hearken to my voice, and do ye according to all that I shall command you." The {{אתם ``ye,'' after ``do,'' seems to be placed there instead of with ``hearken.'' Some MSS. have ,{אותם} which is evidently wrong. It is only the Targum that countenances this reading: all the versions read according to the meaning given above. --- Ed.

shall be, he says, to me a people, and I will be to you a God God might have positively required of the Jews what is implanted in all by nature; for they who have never been taught acknowledge that God ought to be worshipped; and the right way of worshipping him is when we obey his precepts. God then might have thus commanded them according to his supreme aufilority. The commands of kings, as it is said, are brief, for they are no soothing expressions, nor do they reason, nor employ any persuasive language. How much greater is the authority of God, who can intimate by a nod what he pleases and what he demands? But as though he descended from his high station, he seeks by promises to attach people to himself, so that they may winingly obey him. Thus God recommends his law by manifesting his favor, and does not merely assert his own authority. Since then God thus kindly addresses his people, and promises so great a reward to obedience, how base and abominable is the contumacy of men when they repudiate his law. Hence the Prophet shews here more clearly why he began by saying, Cursed is every one who obeys not, etc.: for kindness had profited nothing; friendly and tender words, the paternal invitation of God, produced no effect; as though he had said, ``God could not, doubtless, have treated you more gently and kindly than by reminding you in a paternal manner of your duty, and by adding promises sufficient to soften even the hardest hearts; but as this has been done without effect, what now remains for God to do but to thunder and announce only his curses?''

We now understand what the Prophet had in view. But it may be here objected, --- that all this was useless and without any benefit, for the Jews could not have undertaken the yoke of the law, until it was inscribed on their hearts. To this I answer, that of this very thing they were here at the same time reminded: for though the teaching of the letter could do nothing but condemn the people, and hence it is said by Paul to be what brings death, (2 Corinthians 3:6) yet the faithful knew that the Spirit of regeneration would not be denied them, if they sought it of God. Then, in the first place, it was their fault that the law was not inscribed on their hearts; and, in the second place, a free promise of forgiveness was added; for why were those sacrifices and expiations under the law, and so many ceremonies, which had respect to their reconciliation to God, but in order that the people might feel assured that God would be propitious and appeasable to them, though they could not satisfy the law? This teaching then was not useless as to the faithful; for God, when he required from the Israelites what they ought to have done, was at the time ready to inscribe the law on their hearts, and also to forgive their sins. But when through obstinate wickedness they rejected the whole law, the Prophet justly declares here that the curse of God was on them; because they basely rejected God's promises, by which he testified his paternal kindness towards them.

He adds, That I may establish the oath which I have sworn to your fathers, to give them a land abounding in milk and honey, according to what it is at this day Here he does not refer to the chief part of their happiness; but only the land of Canaan is mentioned as the pledge or the earnest of God's favor; for his promise had regard to something much higher than to the land of Canaan. God had indeed promised this as an inheritance to the Israelites: but when he says, that he would be their

God and they his people, the promise of eternal life and of celestial glory is included, according to what is said elsewhere, that he is not the God of the dead but of the living. (Matthew 22:31) And we must ever bear in mind what is said by the Prophet Habakkuk,

``Thou art our God, we shall not die.'' (Habakkuk 1:12)

God then promised to the Israelites something far greater than the possession of the land, when he said, that he would be their God But that land was a symbol, an earnest and a pledge of his paternal favor. All these things well agree together.

And to the same purpose is what the Prophet adds, that God had formerly sworn to their fathers, that he would give them that land by an hereditary right: and this promise had been fulfined to their posterity. Were any to lay hold on this only, --- that God's favor was seen in the land of Canaan, because they had obtained it through the expulsion of the heathens by God's kindness, the view would be frigid, and the Prophet would diminish much from that promise which far exceeds all that man can conceive. Hence, as I have said, in speaking of the land of Canaan, he accommodates himself no doubt to the comprehension of a rude and ignorant people, and mentions the earnest and the pledge, that they alight see by their eyes, exhibited to them even in this world and in this frail life some evidence of that favor, which far surpasses all that can be desired in the world.

Now, when he says, That I may establish [290] the oath which I have sworn to your fathers, God doubtless shews that though the Jews should obey him, they had not yet deserved by their obedience the inheritance promised before they were born. God then here proves that it was through his gratuitous kindness that; they became heirs of the land. How so? because they were not created when God sware to Abraham that he would give that land to him and to his posterity. As then the promise had been given long before, it follows that it could not be ascribed to the merits of the people, that they had at length in due time obtained the land. As to the oath, God by referring to it extols his favor; for he not only promised the land for an heritage to the children of Abraham, but he also added an oath, that the covenant might appear more sure. But the Prophet at the same time intimates, that they, if ungrateful to God, might justly be deprived of the promised inheritance; as though he had said, ``There is no ground for you to expostulate with God, as though he defrauded you, were he to cast you out of the land; for God himself does not disinherit you, but your own wickedness; and ye are now unworthy, for God regards you not as his children.'' While then the Prophet takes away every ground for boasting, that the Jews might not think that they possessed the land as a reward for their merits, he also reminds them that they might be justly deprived of their land, and that on account of their own fault, as they rendered not to God the service they owed to him. Hence he says, that I might establish the oath which I have sworn to your fathers

A land, he says, flowing with milk and honey: this mode of speaking was often adopted by Moses, (Exodus 3:8, Exodus 3:17; Exodus 13:5; Exodus 33:3; Leviticus

[290] "Establish — {στήσω}," is the Septuagint; ``awaken --- suscitem,'' is the Vulgate; ``perform,'' is the Syriac; ``confirm,'' is the Targum. ``To make to stand'' is the literal meaning of the verb. Hence the most correct word is ``confirm.'' The connection of this verse is not with the immediately preceding words, but with ``Hearken'' and ``do,'' etc., at the middle of the former verse. Hearken and do, that I may confirm the oath, etc. --- Ed.

20:24) The land was no doubt from the beginning very fertile; but it is probable that it became more fruitful after the people entered into it, for it was in a manner renewed; and it was God's design to shew in a visible manner how great; Was the efficacy of his covenant. It was not then to no purpose that Moses said so often that it was a land flowing with milk and honey.

He afterwards adds, According as it is at this day He produces witnesses; as though he had said, ``God has dealt faithfully with you, for he has performed the faith pledged to your fathers, and has fulfined his oath: but now since ye have polluted this land, and the memory of God's favor is as it were buried among you, and ye even tread under your feet his law --- since then such great impiety averts his blessing from you, what remains for him to do, but to drive you away into exile?'' We hence see that there is here to be understood an implied threatening, when he says that God had performed what he had promised to the fathers, and promised with this condition --- that they were to obey his commands.

We have already spoken of the Prophet's answer. When he answered, Amen, he did not wait for what the people would say; for the greater part no doubt made a clamor and sought to make shifts with God. So great was their effrontery, that they often rose up insolently against the Prophets. Then as he knew that they were so refractory, he subscribed to the curse in his own name. It follows ---

Jeremiah 11:6-8

6. Then the LORD said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, amid do them.

6, Ex dixit Jehova ad me, clama (hoc est, clamosa voce promulga) verba haec in urbibus Jehudah et in compitis Jerusalem dicendo, Audite verba foederis hujus et facite ca.

7. For I earnestly protested unto your fathers, in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice.

7. Quia contestando contestatus sum patribus vestris dic qua feci ascendere eos e terra Egypti usque ad diem hanc, mane surgendo et contestando et dicendo, Audite vocem meam:

8. Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do; but they did them not.

8. Et non audierunt et non inclinarunt aurem suam; et ambularunt quisque post pravitatem cordis sui mali: et (ideo, copula hic inative accipitur) venire feci (hoc est, immisi) super eos omnia verba foederis hujus, quod mandavi ut facerent; et non fecerunt.

Here the Prophet explains more clearly why he had been commanded to promulgate the words of the covenant: for the greater part of the people were no doubt ready boldly to object and say, ``What dost thou mean? Are not we the disciples of Moses? Thou, forsooth! thinkest that thou hast to do with a barbarous people. Have we not been from our childhood taught the law of God? Is it not daily enjoined on

us? We are sufficiently instructed in this doctrine of which thou pretendest that we are ignorant. Be gone hence; and go either to the Chaldeans or to the Assyrians or to the Egyptians; for we understand what the law teaches.''

There is then no doubt but that Jeremiah had been repulsed by this kind of insolence: he therefore shews that he had a just cause to set before them the law of God; for so great an oblivion had prevailed, that they did not know what God had formerly taught in his law: and besides, they and their fathers had been always rebellious, so that they had ever need of being taught, according to what is said by Isaiah, that the people were to be treated like children and taught, A, A; B, B, and that though the same things were repeated, they yet stopped at the rudiments and never made any progress. (Isaiah 28:10, 13) As then Isaiah reproached the people with tardiness in learning the law, so Jeremiah shews now that they were not to think it strange that God commanded his law to be proclaimed to them, because it had been hitherto despised by them. The rest we shall defer.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast been pleased daily to invite us to thyself with so ranch benignity and kindness, we may not with deaf ears turn aside from the doctrine which is set forth for our salvation, but that we may attend to it and persevere also in that obedience which thou justly requirest from us, so that we may make increasing progress in true religion, and so form the whole course of our life according to thy righteous law, that we may fight as good soldiers to thee in this world, until we shall at length come to that blessed rest, which is prepared for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Forty-Fifth

We observed in the last Lecture the complaint which God made against his people, --- that, he had tried every means to reconcile them to himself, but all in vain. But there is great weight and emphasis in these words, --- that by protesting he protested, etc.; as though he subjected himself to the judgment of a third party; for we are wont to protest against those who do not winingly come before the tribunal of a judge. God then takes this figure from the common practice of men, and says that he protested, and that not only once, but repeatedly. He afterwards adds that he had done this not only in one age, but from the time their fathers came forth from bondage to that day. It was then extreme perverseness, when God ceased not to call them to himself, and yet spoke to the deaf. But what follows is still more emphatical, --- that he rose early: for to take this transitively as some do, is what I do not approve. God then says, that he was so solicitous about their welfare, that he rose early to call them. There is no doubt but that God applies here to himself what properly belonged to his Prophets, as he also concedes to his servants what rightly belongs to him, and what cannot be applied to men, except by way of concession.

But God does here extol the authority of his word, when he says that he rose early; and at the same time he amplifies their ingratitude, inasmuch as they had despised him, when they saw that he, like the head of a family, provided for their welfare. We hence then learn how much God values his word; for he testifies that there is no difference between him and his servants, whose labors he employs in teaching his

Church. We also hence learn how inexcusable is our wickedness when we reject God speaking thus familiarly to us. We now then perceive the import of this passage. But it may, in the third place, be observed, that God's name is in vain pretended, except when he himself speaks. The Papists of this day would have whatever they say, according to their own fancies, to be received without any dispute; but God shews in this place that he is not offended except when he is himself despised; and he at the same time declares that he is so connected with his prophets, that they bring nothing of their own, nor anything else except what proceeds from him.

He now adds, that this only he required from his chosen people, to obey his voice The justness of this precept shews how base and wicked was the impiety of the people; and God also shews that they had not the pretext of error or of ignorance; for the only way of evading was to pretend that they wished no other thing than to render to God the worship due to him; but the rule he had prescribed in his law was such as could not be mistaken. It hence follows that they wilfully went astray after superstitions, for they were sufficiently taught in the law what God approved. This then is the reason why he so often repeats that he required nothing from the children of Abraham except to hear his voice.

It afterwards follows, Yet they heard not, and bent not, or inclined not their ear Here the Prophet does not accuse a few men of perverseness, but says that, from the time they had been redeemed, they had been rebellious against God: and he exaggerates their sin by saying that they inclined not their ear; for this was no doubt added for the sake of emphasis, as though the Prophet had said, --- that it was only their own fault that the right way was not quite evident to them, for they deigned not to give ear to God. Now, it is a proof of extreme contempt, when we not only repudiate what God says to us, and refuse to obey his authority and advice, but when we close up every avenue, and, as Tar as we can, forbid him to speak to us; this is surely an extremity of insolence. It may indeed be, that one will hear another speaking, and yet will not do what he says; he still will shew some courtesy, lest a complaint of inattention be made; but it is an intolerable barbarity when we do not listen to the words of another. God here complains that the Israelites had not only been disobedient to him, after having been instructed, but that they had been so refractory, that they insolently rejected all the words of the prophets; which was not only a proof of base impiety, but also of barbarous perverseness. We now then understand what the Prophet means.

He says, that they walked every one in the wickedness of his own evil heart [291] As he had before shewn that they had been in due time warned, it is clear that they followed not through mistake their impious superstitions, but because they rejected the true worship of God, and hearkened not to the teaching of the prophets. By saying that they walked every one, etc., the Prophet doubtless intended to include them all as it were in one bundle; as though he had said, that they had not been drawn away by a sudden impulse, as it is often the case when an agitation is made by a few, and when the most follow, being driven as it were by a storm, and think not what they do; for thus some terror often seizes on the minds of the many, so

[291] On the meaning of these words, see a note in vol. 1.

that they go here and there without knowing where they are going. But the Prophet here teaches us that every one followed his own counsel; as though he had said that the worship of God had not been thus rejected by the influence of the multitude, but that each one had his own object, and had concocted the wickedness and the great sin of rejecting God. There is then more meaning and force in this way of speaking, than if he had said that they all walked in the wickedness of their own hearts. He further shews that they were all, from the least to the greatest, implicated, as they say, in the same impiety.

He afterwards adds, that God had brought upon them the words, that is, the threatenings of the covenant By the words of the covenant he means not here the doctrine or precepts of the law. He indeed mentioned before the words of the covenant for the commands of God; but now, on finding that he had to do with refractory men, who were not capable of receiving any doctrine, he comes to threatenings. But God prescribes first in his law what he wins to be done, and then adds not only kind invitations, but also what is alluring, in order to conciliate the minds of men: but when there is no attention to obedience, and no care for it, he then comes to threatenings. Though the Prophet had omitted the promises, he had yet spoken previously of the law itself; but he says now that God had executed what he had denounced on them.

He further says, Which I have commanded to be done; and they did them not There seems indeed to be a confusion here; for by the words of this covenant, he no doubt means threatenings, as I have stated: then he immediately adds, which I have commanded to be done, and they did them not But, as I have already reminded you, the Prophet had previously, with sufficient clearness, taught them that the rule of a godly and holy life was set forth in the law; but he now refers especially to threatenings. It is then not strange that he speaks thus indistinctly, for the people had in a manner perverted the law. There were indeed in the law these two distinct things --- doctrine, or a rule of life; and threatenings, which were added as stimulants to rouse the sloth of men, or rather to subdue their perverseness. But as the Israelite, and the Jews had not attended to the voice of God, the Prophet here blends threatenings with precepts. [292]

We now understand what the Prophet means in this passage, when he says that he was sent by God to cry, Hear ye the words of this covenant; for they were forgetful

[292] There is certainly an incongruity in taking the expression, "the words of the covenant," in two different senses. The verse is omitted in the Septuagint, but retained in the other versions and the Targum. This clause, in the Vulgate and Syriac, is thus given: "I have brought on them the words of this covenant." The Targum is, "I have brought vengeance on them, because they undertook not the words of this covenant." To bring words on one, seems to mean to enforce, to enjoin them. I cannot find the phrase anywhere else. Taken in this sense, the expressions will be wholly suitable to the rest of the passage, which I render thus: 6. Then said Jehovah to me, Proclain these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, — Hear the words of the covenant, Even these, and do them: 7. Verily, testifying I testified to your fathers In the day I brought them from the land of Egypt; And to this day, early-rising and testifying, Saying, "Hearken to my voice:" 8. Yet they hearkened not, nor bent their ear, But walked, every one, according to the resolutions Of their own wicked heart; Yea, I urged on them all the words of the covenant., Even these, which I commanded them to do; But they did them not. To "testify," rather than to "protest,:' is the meaning of the verb, when followed by {,{ב as here. To this testifying was added that of urging or pressing on them the duty of attending to all the words of the covenant; but all was to no purpose. To introduce punishment here comports not with the passage. --- Ed.

of true religion; and such was their oblivion and impious' contempt of the whole law, that they had need of being taught its first rudiments. This is one thing. He then shews how solicitous God had been about their welfare, so that he had not neglected any of the duties of the best of fathers, and that yet his labor had been all in vain; for they had not only been led away by their own lusts, but their inward wickedness had closed their ears, so that they deigned not to listen to God's voice; and this had not been in one age only, but from the time they came out of Egypt to that day. It hence follows that they were justly punished, for God had tried all means before he had recourse to severity; but since he had adopted all kinds of ways to reform them, and all in vain, the only thing that remained was to punish them as men past all remedy. This is the import of the whole. He now adds ---

Jeremiah 11:9-10

9. And the LORD said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

9. Et dixit Jehova ad me, inventa est conspiratio (ad verbum, colligatio; nam {רשק} significat proprie ligare vel connectere, sed metaphorica est significatio cum transfertur ad conspirationem) in viro (hoc est, in viris) Jehudah et in civibus Jerusalem.

10. They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers.

10. Reversi sunt ad iniquitates patrum suorum superiorum (qui ante fuerunt) qui noluerunt audire verba mea; et ipsi ambularunt post deos alienos, ut servirent ipsis; dissoluerunt domus Israel et domus Jehudah foedus meum, quod pepigeram cum patribus ipsorum.

Here the Prophet joins closer battle with the men of his age, and says, that they were worse than their fathers; for this is the meaning of the word, banding or joining together. For when the Israelites concurred in a body in ungodly superstitions, it was more excusable at the beginning, for they had not yet struck deep roots in true religion; but when God by his prophets had endeavored many times, and in various ways, to restore them to the right way, and when his diligence and assiduous efforts had proved fruitless, it was an evidence of confirmed and hopeless obstinacy. He then says, that this had been discovered; for this is what he means by saying, that it had been found out This verb is often used in Scripture in another sense, but it means here the same, as though he had said, that the conspiracy of the people had been discovered or proved, as it is said of thieves when found out, that they are caught in the very act. So God says here, that it was no matter of dispute whether the people had designedly and from sheer wickedness perverted his true and lawful worship; the conspiracy, [293] he says, is sufficiently notorious

We then understand the meaning of the Prophet to be, --- that not a part of the people was implicated in impiety, but that all, from the least to the greatest, were together defiled, and that this was done, not by some foolish impulse of the moment,

[293] Rendered "{σύνδεσμος}, binding together,'' by the Sept., --- ``conjuratio, confederacy, or conspiracy,'' by the Vulg. and Arab., --- ``rebellion,'' by the Syr. and Targ., --- ``combination,'' as given by Gataker and Blayney, would express better the meaning of the original word. --- Ed

but designedly, for they banded together; and further, that this was sufficiently evident, so that they could no longer contend as to the fact, for their wickedness was sufficiently manifest.

And he says between Judah and Israel [294] There is here implied a sharp reproof; for we know that these two kingdoms had not only entertained a hidden grudge, but fiercely contended with one another, Since then the discord had been such between the ten tribes and the tribe of Judah, that it was as it were an insane hatred, so that they wished wholly to destroy one another, for the Jews sent for the Egyptians when the Israelites had called to arms the Syrians and the Assyrians for the destruction of Judah. Since then they so inimically treated one another for so many ages, what did this now mean? What a monstrous thing it was, that they conspired together to subvert the worship of God, to overturn everything true in religion, and to set up their own idols! We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet; he intimates, that they had in all other things been enemies, and that they only united in this one thing, that is, in carrying on war against God, in subverting his worship, and rendering void his law. We hence see what the Spirit of God had in view in saying, that a conspiracy was found out; which was, that the Prophet might not use many words, as though the matter was doubtful! God then bids him positively to declare this fact, like at scribe who records the sentence of a judge; and thus God shews that he dealt with the Jews, as men deal with those who are condemned.

He also adds, that they had returned, etc. He shews for what purpose they had conspired, even to return to the vices of their fathers, who had been before them Some render the word ``ancestors;'' but the meaning of the Prophet is not thus sufficiently expressed, for what he means is, that the Israelites had been refractory from the very beginning, so that God could never subdue their wayward dispositions. It must however be observed, that he speaks not of the most ancient, as {הרשנים}, erashnim are the ancient who were before them; [295] but as there had been a continued succession or series of impiety, the Prophet calls them here, the former fathers, who had first begun to shake off the yoke of God even to that day. And he again mentions what we have before noticed, that they were unwining to hear Though ignorance does not wholly clear or absolve us, it yet extenuates a crime; but God shews that the Israelites had been disobedient from the beginning. Though he had by Moses sufficiently taught them, we yet find that they often rose up against Moses. If we inquire of their origin, it appears to have been marked with resolute impiety;

[294] There is here an oversight. “Israel” is not mentioned here, but the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. “Israel” is mentioned at the end of the next verse, as having with “Judah” annulled the covenant. — Ed.

[295] The Sept. have “{τῶν} {πρότερον} --- who were before:'' the Vulg. improperly joins it with ``iniquities,'' --- ``the former iniquities of the fathers;'' the Syriac renders it ``ancient,'' and the Targum, ``former,'' both connecting it with ``fathers.'' The word means the ``first,'' rather than the ``former.'' If we take it as connected with ``fathers,'' then the first fathers with whom the covenant, after they came out of Egypt, was made, are meant; but it may be taken as in apposition with ``fathers;'' then the first who refused to hear God, are referred to. Taking this view, we may render the verse thus --- 10. They have turned to the iniquities of their fathers --- The first who refused to hearken to my words; And they have walked after alien gods to serve them: Annulled have the house of Israel and the house of Judah My covenant, which I made with their fathers. The word for ``iniquities'' means perversions, distortions, the turning of things to purposes not intended. These are the kinds of iniquities which are meant. Perverting the truth rather than denying or renouncing it, had ever been the sin of the Jews. Instead of worshipping God himself, they worshipped him by means of idols, and through the mediation of inferior gods. This was the perversion. Alien gods were mediators; hence they never renounced God's worship. But God deemed this as an annulment of his covenant, by which they were required to worship him alone. --- Ed.

they were unwining to obey God.

He then adds, that they walked after alien gods that they might serve them There is ever an implied contrast between God and idols. God had given them evidences enough of his power and glory, and we may justly say, that he had sufficiently proved himself to he the only true God. How then was it that the; Israelites had given the preference to fictitious gods? Doubtless no unwining error could have been pretended. We hence see that they had rejected the true God and wilfully followed their own devices. He then says, that they might serve them But God had already bound them to himself, as he had redeemed them; when, therefore, they devoted themselves to alien gods, was not their ingratitude thus most fully proved?

He at length subjoins, by way of explanation, Therefore the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dissolved my covenant He confirms what I have just said, --- that they had not erred because the way was unknown, but because they were refractory and untameable in their disposition, and would not bear to hear God, thought he kindly shewed to them what they were to do. But the word covenant expresses more than this, --- that God had not only delivered them his precepts by Moses, but had also adopted them as his own people, and at the same time pledged his faith to them,

``I shall be your God, be ye my people,'' (Jeremiah 11:4)

Since then God had so kindly allured them to himself, how monstrous was their rebellion, When they refused to hear his voice! With reference to this the word {ברית}, berit, is used; for God had not only delivered to them a rule of life, but also adopted them as his people, that they might be obedient to him.

By saying that he made a covenant with their fathers, he refers to that time when he brought the people out of Egypt, for then was the race of Abraham united. They were indeed twelve distinct tribes; but there was one head over the people, there was one priesthood, and they formed afterwards one kingdom. God then shews, that though the ten tribes made for themselves in after time another king, and the tribe of Judah was then divided, and there were in this separation some special causes of enmity, they yet had always been of the same disposition, and proved how like their fathers they were, as though he i had said, ``They were formerly one people, they are now two, yet they have conspired together; their iniquity is the same, in this they are united; and there is among them a binding together.'' It follows ---

Jeremiah 11:11

11. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold,I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them.

11. Propterea sic dicit Jehova, Ecce ego inducam (inducens, vel, induco) super eos malum, a quo non poterunt exire (hoc est, se explicare; ad verbum, quod non poterunt exire ab ipso) et clamabunt ad me et non audiam eos.

The Prophet now denounces on them a calamity; for it is probable that for many years he had been as their teacher threatening them, but all in vain. Hence he now confirms what we have before observed, --- that their impious conspiracy was fully known and proved, so flint they were not now to be called or drawn before the judge's

tribunal, as they had so openly procured for themselves their own ruin.

He then says, that God was, as it were, armed to take vengeance; I will bring, he says, upon them an evil from which they shall not be able to go away [296] Then he adds, and they shall cry to me, but I will not hear them By this latter clause he shews that no hope remained, as they could get no pardon from God, for he would no longer be entreated by them. The import of the whole is, --- that they were so given up to destruction, that it was in vain for them to expect God's mercy. God had indeed often promised in his law that he would be reconciled to them; but the Prophet says now that every hope was cut off, because they had rejected God's covenant. Hence, whatever God had promised respecting his kindness and mercy, belonged to them no longer.

Let us now learn also how to accommodate this doctrine to ourselves. And, first, we may remark, that there is a great difference between us, who have been plainly, and for a long time, taught what is the true and lawful worship of God, and those miserable people who were blind in darkness; hence much more atrocious is our sin and worthy of much heavier punishment. Then we may also add this, --- that though God may for a time bear with us, the whole time of his forbearance will have to be accounted for. There is no day in which God does not accuse us; and thus he rises early, and thus he shews us what concern he has for our salvation; but if we remain asleep in our sloth, a threatening this day is suspended over our heads, and especially when we consider that God comes nearer, as it were, to us than to his ancient people. And hence we may also learn how much less tolerable is our ingratitude. It ought, therefore, to be carefully noticed, that God is armed against those before whom he has set his word, not only for one day but for many years, when he has found that he has labored in vain; and that when he is offended with their obstinate wickedness, there is no more any remedy.

But it may be asked here, How is it that God declares here that he would not be propitious to the Israelites, though they even cried to him, when yet this promise so often occurs,

``Call on me, and I will hear thee?'' (Psalm 50:15)

Though God does not everywhere use such words, yet in many places he makes this promise. But still it may appear inconsistent that he closes up the door of mercy against those who flee to his mercy. But in the next verse he shews what this cry would be; for had they from the heart repented, doubtless his pardon would never have been denied: but we shall presently see that these cries would be rambling, vagrant, and confused; so that they would not direct their prayers to God, nor observe the way which is made known to us all; for they would cry Without repentance and faith, according to what follows; for the Prophet says ---

Jeremiah 11:12

[296] The literal rendering is as follows: — 11. Therefore thus saith Jehovah, — Behold, I will cause to come on them an evil, From which they shall not be able to go forth: And they shall loudly cry to me, But I will not hearken to them. The third line in Welsh is literally the Hebrew, — Yr hwn his gallant vyned allan ohono. Which they will not be able to go forth from it. The verb {{זעק is not merely to cry, but to cry loudly, or vehemently, or clamorously; the effect of great distress impatiently endured.Our version and Blayney are wrong in rendering {ו} And thought It is not what may have been, is meant, but what would be. It is expressly foretold what they would do; and corresponding with this are all the versions and the Targum. --- Ed.

12. Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem go, and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble.

12. Et ibunt urbes Jehudah et cives Jerusalem et clamabunt ad deos quibus ipsi fecerunt suffitum; et servando non servabunt eos in tempore afflictionis.

The Prophet then shews in these words that they were not touched by a true and sincere feeling of repentance who cried thus indiscriminately to God and to idols. [297]

But another question may be here raised, How could they flee to God and to foreign gods too? The ready answer is this, that the unbelieving, in a turbulent state of mind, turn here and there, so that they lay hold of nothing certain, or sure and fixed. This we see in the Papists --- they cry to God and at the same time to a great number of gods. Let us therefore know, that there is in all the unbelieving a spirit, as it were, of giddiness, which turns them into different expedients, so that now they call on God, then they flee to their idols. Men naturally are led to God when any distress holds them bound; hence they call on God: but afterwards, being not satisfied with him alone, they betake themselves to their own devices, and heap together, as I have said, a vast multitude of gods. Since then we see this to be done under the Papacy in our day, we need not wonder that it was done formerly, and that the Jews were on this account condemned.

The Prophet now addresses the Jews only; he had before spoken of the Israelites, but he now speaks especially to his own people, Go shall the cities of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem, etc. What shall they do? They shall cry to their gods We hence see that their prayers were rambling, as though they poured them unto the air: therefore God could not have heard them. For whenever God promises to be propitious and appeasable he requires faith and repentance: but there was in this people an impious wantonness, and no faith, for they were entangled in their own superstitions.

The meaning is, that the Jews, when oppressed by calamities, would make their prayers to the true God, but without understanding, without any discrimination, but on the contrary, in a confused state of mind: and that this would be sufficiently evident, for they would at the same time seek the aid of various idols, but that they would gain no help, either from God or from their idols; and why? because they would be unworthy to be heard by God, as they would not call on him in a right spirit, not with faith and repentance; and their idols would not be able to bring them any help. It hence follows that they would be altogether in a hopeless state.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast been pleased, in so kind a manner, according to thy paternal kindness, to invite us to thyself, we may not be refractory, but winingly and quietly submit ourselves to thee, and not wait until thou shakest us with terror, and shewest us signs of thy wrath; hut may we anticipate thy dreadful

[297] But the most obvious meaning of the passage is, that the Jews would first cry to God, and that being not heard, they would then cry to alien gods. Hence our version renders the {ו at the beginning of this verse, ``Then,'' and rightly too: so does the Syriac, though the other versions render it ``And,'' as Blayney does: and if so rendered, the connection would appear the same, --- And go shall the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, And they shall loudly cry to the gods, To whom they burn incense; But saving they will not save them At the time of their calamity. --- Ed.

judgment, and thus always go on, so as to have no other object in view but to glorify thy name through the whole course of our life, until we shall at length be made partakers of that glory which thine only begotten Son has obtained for us. --- Amen.

Lecture Forty-Sixth

Jeremiah 11:13

13. For according to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal.

13. Quia pro numero urbium tuaram fuerunt dii tui, Jehudah; et pro numero platearum, Jerusalem, posuistis altaria in opprobrium, altaria ad offerendum suffitum Baal.

The Prophet shews here that the dews were not only polluted with one kind of superstition, but that they sought for themselves fictitious gods from all quarters, so that the land was fined and, as it were, deluged with innumerable superstitions. He says, that in proportion to the number of cities were the gods in the kingdom of Judah, and that in every city, in proportion to the number of streets, altars were built, that they might burn incense to Baal

There seems, however, to be some inconsistency in the words; for if they all worshipped Baal, where could be found the multitude of gods which the Prophet condemns? It then follows, that there was everywhere the same form of superstition, or that they did not in every place burn incense to Baal. But from this place and from others we may gather that this is a common name; for though all idols had their distinctive names, yet this name was applied indiscriminately, and all idols had it in common. For what does Baal mean but a patron, or an inferior god, who procured the favor of the supreme God? The prophets often use the word in the plural number, and call the lesser or inferior gods Baalim, who were regarded as mediators or angels; and farther, they often mean all kinds of idols by Baal. There is to be understood here a figure, by which a part is taken for the whole; for the Prophet intended by the word to include all those gods which the Jews had devised for themselves, though their names were different.

But what the Prophet condemned in the people was, as we see, daily practiced. For there is no end, when men once depart ever so little from the pure worship of the only true God: for when anything is blended with it, one error immediately produces another; so various errors will cumulate, tin men fall into a labyrinth from which there is no exit. This is clearly seen under the Papacy. At first Satan, by spurious pretences, led men away from the simple worship of God and his pure doctrine; and as there is in all an inbred curiosity, every one had a desire to add something of his own. Hence then it happened that so great a mass of errors and superstitions has prevailed. It is nothing strange, then, that the Prophet condemned the Jews, not only for having departed from the true and lawful worship of God, but also for having as many idols as cities, and for having so many forms of worship as there were streets in their cities. And we hence also learn that all the superstitions among the whole people had the same root; for though they differed in particulars, they all yet proceeded from the same principle; for every one wished to have his own God.

It hence happened, that every city had its patron, and every family also devised a god for itself; for no one was satisfied with the common worship. It is then wholly necessary that we should faithfully worship the one true God; otherwise the Devil will immediately bring in strange gods and a mixed multitude of gods: so that it hence evidently appears, that we thus justly suffer for our impious levity in forsaking the fountain of living waters.

He says that altars were built for reproach. [298] This may be referred to God, because they offered to God a heinous effrontery in setting up their profane altars in opposition to that one true altar which God had commanded to be built for him in the temple. But this is a strained interpretation. It is more suitable to refer this to the people, because they erected altars for themselves to their own shame, as though he had said that the Jews were themselves the authors of all their evils, so that they ought to consider them as due to their impiety, being the punishments inflicted by the Lord. It is the same as though he had said, ``God will indeed chastise you, as ye are worthy of being so treated, but ascribe the whole fault to yourselves; for the altars, raised by your own hands, will be to you for reproach and shame.''

He at length adds, To offer incense to Baal They sought doubtless the favor of the supreme God; but as they devised for themselves patrons, as mediators between them and God, according to the Platonic figment, which has prevailed in all ages, the Prophet here declares that their gods were as many as their cities, and even as many as their streets; for God does not admit those sophistical subtleties by which hypocrites seek to escape; for whenever his glory is transferred to others, he complains that new gods are introduced. [299] It follows ---

Jeremiah 11:14

14. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.

14. Et tu ne ores pro populo hoc, et ne tollas pro ipsis clamorem et precationem; quia ego non audiens (non audiam) in tempore quo clamabunt ad me pro (vel, super) malo suo (super afflictione sua)

That the Jews might understand that a sore calamity was nigh, and that God would not be appeasable, the Prophet himself is forbidden to intercede for them. There is no doubt but that even when he reproved the people in the severest strain, he made supplications to God for them; for he sustained a twofold character: when he went forth as the herald of celestial vengeance, he thundered against the ungodly and the despisers of God; but at the same time he humbly supplicated pardon in behalf of lost and miserable men; for had he not been solicitous for the salvation of the

[298] The word is {בשת}. ``Bosheth, shame,'' says Lowth, ``was a nickname for Baal. (See Hosea 9:10.) So Jerubbaal is called Jerubbosheth in 2 Samuel 11:21.'' The word is left out in the Septuagint; the other versions and the Targum render it differently; its meaning was evidently not understood. It may be rendered here ``baseness,'' or a base thing; the last clause is explanatory of this, --- Ye have set up altars for a base thing --- Altars to burn incense to a Baal. By putting the indefinite article we avoid the contrariety which Calvin refers to. It is given in the singular number in all the versions except the Vulgate, which has Baalim. --- Ed.

[299] The connection of this verse has not been pointed out by Calvin. It begins with "For," or because; so that a reason is given for what has been said previously, and that is not found in it he immediately preceding verse, but at the end of the 11th, "I will not hearken unto them;" then what is said here is given as a reason. But if we render {כי ``though,'' as it is often done, and not ``For,'' the connection is with the next preceding verse; their gods would not save them, ``though'' they were as many as their cities, etc. This seems to be the most natural connection. --- Ed

people, had he not diligently prayed, it would not have been necessary to prohibit him to pray. It hence appears that the Prophet was diligent in these two things, that he severely reproved the people according to God's command, and that he also was a suppliant in seeking God's favor to the unworthy. This is one thing.

Now then that God prohibits Jeremiah to pray, this was not done for his sake only, but he had a regard also to the whole people, that they might know that a sentence was pronounced on them, and that there was no hope left. We hence see that God positively declares that it was his purpose to destroy the people, and that therefore there was no room for prayer.

But it may be asked, Whether the Prophet, by going on in praying, offended God? for we shall see that he was still so anxious for the welfare of the people that he ceased not to pray: and what is said of Jeremiah is true also of all the other prophets; and the faithful have ever prayed for pardon, though the state of things had been brought to an extremity. But we must observe, that God, when he thus issues a simple prohibition, often stimulates the prayers of his people, according to what we read of Samuel; for though he knew from God's own mouth that Saul was rejected, he yet from love ceased not to seek his good and to intercede God for him. (1 Samuel 15:35; 1 Samuel 16:1) But the prophets doubtless paid regard to God's counsel in this case: yet as God did not speak for the sake of Jeremiah, but of the people, the Prophet is not to be charged with rashness or presumption, or foolish obstinacy or inconsiderate zeal, for having afterwards prayed; for he knew that this was not so much for his sake as on account of the people.

But there is another thing to be observed, --- that Jeremiah was not forbidden to pray for the remnant, that is, for the elect, and for the seed from which the Church was afterwards to arise; but he was forbidden to pray for the whole body of the people: and no doubt he felt assured from that time that no remedy could be applied, and that the people would be driven into exile. This then is to be understood of the whole mass of the people; Jeremiah might still pray for the elect, and also for the new Church, that is, for the renewal of the Church: he was not indeed to pray that the Lord would not execute the vengeance which had been already decreed, for that could not be turned aside by any prayers.

We now then understand the meaning of this passage, --- that Jeremiah prayed daily for all men, and also for the renewal of the Church; but that he was to look for the calamity of exile as a certain thing, for this had been fixed by God.

As to the words, Raise not for them a cry or a prayer, we have said elsewhere that there are two ways of speaking, which though different in some respects, are yet the same in meaning --- to raise up and to cast a prayer. Hence the saints are said sometimes to cast their prayers: ``Let my prayer be cast in thy presence.'''For no one is rightly prepared to call on God, except he is cast down in himself and laid prostrate. Hence the prayers of the saints are said to be cast on account of their humility; they are also said to be raised up on account of the fervor of their zeal, and also on account of their confidence. And that he repeats the same thing in different words is not without a meaning; for it is the same as though he had.said, ``Thou wilt do nothing by beseeching, praying, interceding and supplicating.'' God then

confirms by these several words that he would not hereafter be reconciled to the people.

It follows, For I will not hear them at the time when they shall cry to me There seems not to be a suitable reason given here, for God might have conceded to the Prophet what had not been denied to the ungodly and the rebellious: but he simply means that he would be a severe Judge in executing punishment, so that there would be no room for mercy: I will not then hear them; that is, ``If even they cry, I will not hear them, (it is an argument from the greater to the less) much less then will I hear thee for them.'' But why was not God propitious to his servant? To this I answer, that God is more ready to shew mercy when any one himself calls on him, than when he is supplicated by others. The meaning is, that whether they themselves prayed or employed others to pray for them, God would not be reconciled to them.

What might be objected here has been elsewhere answered; for if they had from the heart and sincerely prayed, God would have no doubt heard them; for that promise never disappoints any,

``Nigh is God to all who call upon him;'' (Psalm 145:18)

but it is added, ``in truth.'' As then hypocrites are here spoken of who poured forth rambling and false prayers, and blended the worship of the true God with that of their own idols, it is no wonder that. God rejected their prayers, for our prayers are sanctified by faith and repentance. When, therefore, unbelief prevails, and when the heart cleaves perversely to wickedness, our prayers are polluted and presumptuous; for then the name of God is profaned. It is therefore not strange that God rejects those who call on him hypocritically. [300] It follows ---

Jeremiah 11:15

15. What hath my beloved to do in mine house, seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from thee? when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest.

15. Quid dilecto meo in domo men? dum facit ipsa abominationem cum multis; et cato sanctuarii transierunt abs to; quia dum male fecisti, tunc gloriaris.

As the words are concise, this passage is in various ways perverted by interpreters: brevity is commonly obscure. But the explanation almost universally received is this, --- that the Prophet in this sense, think also that the Temple is called his house, on account of his concern for religion, for which he was very zealous. As then he had preferred God's Temple to all earthly things, they think that he thus spoke, What has my beloved to do in mine house? But Jonathan much more correctly applies the words to God; and doubtless, whoever wisely considers the Prophet's words will wonder that so many learned men have been mistaken on a point by no means doubtful. God then, no doubt, speaks here; and he calls his people beloved on account of their adoption.

But the expression is ironical: we cannot think otherwise when we consider how great was the impiety of the people, and how unworthy they were of such an honor on account of their ingratitude. It is yet not strange that they were called beloved, as in other places, for they had been chosen by God. They were in a similar way

[300] See a note in vol. 1. — Ed.

called ``upright'' in the song of Moses; and yet Moses, in that very song, declared how wickedly they had departed from their God. (Deuteronomy 32:15) But he called them ``upright'' in reference to God; for though men do not answer to their vocation, yet the counsel of God remains firm, and can never be changed by the wickedness of men. Though then all had then become apostates, yet God did not suffer his covenant to be abolished, Hence Paul, in speaking of the Jews, in Romans 11:28, when almost all had become the bitterest enemies to the gospel, and had, through their unfaithfulness, wholly forfeited their privileges, so as to become aliens, yet says that they were beloved on account of their fathers:

``For you,'' he says, ``they are indeed for a time enemies;''

which means, that God designed to give their place to the Gentiles, and to adopt them; and yet that, on account of his covenant, they remain, and will remain beloved, that is, with regard to the first adoption.

I shall quote no other similar passages, for it is enough to understand the real meaning of the term: What then has my beloved to do in my house? which means, ``Why do the Jews now pretend to come to the Temple to sacrifice to me? Why do they profess themselves to be my people? What have they to do with my house?'' that is, ``What have they to do with anything like holiness?'' Hence he indirectly touches the Jews in two ways, --- that they bad precluded themselves from the advantage of offering sacrifices in the temple, --- and that it was an increase of their crime, that while they were God's friends, that is, when he bestowed on them his favor, and embraced them as a father his own children, they yet carried on war with him as his avowed enemies, according to what is elsewhere said,

``Ah! I will take vengeance on mine enemies.'' (Isaiah 1:24)

We now see that this meaning is the most suitable. God shews that his temple was polluted by the Jews, when they thoughtlessly rushed there to offer their sacrifices; What have you, he says, to do with my house? Nearly the same thing is said in the first chapter of Isaiah; for God there contemptuously reproves the Jews because they trod the pavement of his temple: ``I truly do not owe you anything; ye indeed come to my courts, but for what purpose? Ye only wear out the pavement of my temple: Stay then at home, and think not that I am bound to you because ye come to the temple.'' So also in this place, What has my beloved to do with my house? He concedes to them the title Beloved, as though he had said, ``Ye are, it is true, beloved, and ye think that God is bound to you; for, relying on the covenant which I made with your father Abraham, ye always continue to make this boasting --- `We are the people of God and his heritage; we are a holy nation and a royal priesthood' --- Beloved ye are,'' he says, ``but what have you to do with my Temple?''

Then he adds, For she has done abomination with many The gender is here changed, for the relative is feminine: but this mode of speaking is everywhere common, as the people are represented to us under the character of a woman. Then he in effect says, ``Behold the daughter of my people hath done abomination with many.'' The Jews were not to enter the Temple except they remained as it were fixed in its pure worship; for as it was the only true Temple, and had in it the only true altar, so they ought to have worshipped none but the only true God, and also to have

observed one rule only in worshipping him. But he says here that they had done abomination; and thus he charged them with those impious devices, those spurious forms of worship which they had adopted, and thus departed from what had been prescribed to them; for abomination is set here in opposition to the law. He says further, that they did this with many. We hence see that the gate of the Temple was closed against them, for the Temple could not be separated from the law, nor yet from God, to whom it was dedicated The Jews, having forsaken the law, and adopted innumerable idols, thrust themselves into the Temple; and hence we see the reason why God complains that they still came to the Temple: ``As then they have done abomination, and done it with many, they have no more anything to do with my law.'' The Temple was a visible image of the one true God, and also the holy receptacle of his law. They despised the law, and gloried in innumerable gods: they sought thus to blend the sanctity of the Temple with a multitude of gods, and with their own depravations and devices.

He says afterwards, that the flesh of the sanctuary had passed away from them: The flesh of the sanctuary have passed away Some apply this to all the faithful, according to that saying,

``Silent before God let all flesh be,'' (Habakkuk 2:20)

but this is forced, and without meaning. He speaks no doubt of sacrifices, and says, that the flesh of the sanctuary, that is, sacrifices, had departed from the people. They no doubt still offered sacrifices very regularly; but God did not accept their sacrifices, because they had corrupted his true worship. This then is the reason why he says that the flesh of the sanctuary had departed from the people, as in other places he denies that it was offered to him. At the same time the Jews wished sacrifices to be regarded as offered to him, and doubtless they boldly referred to them in opposition to the prophets. But God did not accept them, though they sought thus to render him as it were a debtor. ``It is not to me,'' he says, ``that ye offer your sacrifices, but to idols.'' So also in this place he says, The flesh of the sanctuary is taken away from them; for their sacrifices had become polluted. They were then nothing but putrid carcases; for victims, ought to have been offered in the Temple; but they had polluted the Temple, so that it had become a den of robbers, and like a dunghin, in short, a brothel, as Scripture speaks elsewhere. There was then now, doubtless, no flesh of the sanctuary; [301] that is, no lawful sacrifice, such as God approved.

Let us then know that hypocrites, as soon as they depart from the true worship of God, do nothing that can avail them, though they may busy themselves much, and even weary themselves in worshipping God, for all that they offer is abominable. If then we desire to render to God such services as he will accept and approve, let us regard this truth --- that obedience is more valued by him than all sacrifices. (1 Samuel 15:22)

He adds another complaint, --- that when they did evil, they gloried in it. And there is a causal particle introduced, Because, he says, thou gloriest when thou hast

[301] "Holy fleshes," {κρέα} {ἅγια}, carnes sanctae, is the version of the Septuagint and Vulgate, and ``holy flesh'' is the Syriac; but the Targum has ``the worship of my sanctuary.'' Blayney renders it ``holy flesh.'' The word {קדש} means holy, or holiness, and {מקדש} is the sanctuary. --- Ed

done evil The Prophet no doubt means, that they had by no means a right to contend, because they had not only corrupted true religion, but were also proud of their superstitions, and despised God, and set up their own devices against his law. But it was an intolerable thing for men to attempt to subject God to their own will, or rather to their own fancies. Indeed, the faithful do not so purely and so perfectly sacrifice to God, but that some vices are mixed with their offerings; but God nevertheless receives what they offer, though there be some mixture of defilement. How so? Because they acquiesce not in their own performances, but, on the contrary, aspire after purity, though they do not attain it; but when hypocrites exalt themselves against God, and proudly despise his teaching, and prefer their own inventions, and dare even to set up these against his authority, it is doubtless a diabolical presumption, such as contaminates what would otherwise be most holy. [302] It follows ---

Jeremiah 11:16-17

16. The LORD called thy name, A green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken.

16. Olivam viridem, pulchram fructu, forma, vocavit Jehova nomen tuum; ad vocem sermonis (alii vertunt, tumultus) magni accendit (accendere fecit) super eam, et fracti sunt rami ejus (alii vertunt transitive, et fregerunt ramos ejus)

17. For the LORD of hosts, that planted thee, hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke me to anger in offering incense unto Baal.

17. Nam Jehovah (copula enim hic accipitur vice causalis; quia Jehova) exercituum, quite plantavit, loquutus est (vel, pronunciavit) super to malum propter malitiam domus Israel et domus Jehudah, quam fecerunt sibi ad provocandum me, ad faciendum suffitum Baal.

The Prophet says first that the Jews had indeed been for a time like a fruitful and a fair olive; then he adds, that this beauty would not prevent God from breaking its branches and entirely eradicating it. He afterwards confirms this declaration, and says, For God who had planted it, can also root it up whenever it pleases him. This is the import of the two verses.

The Prophet no doubt derides here the vain confidence by which he knew the Jews were deceived: for they were so inebriated with their privileges that they dared to despise the very giver of them. Hence the Prophet thus addressed them, ``Do ye think that so many vices will be unpunished? Ye omit nothing to kindle God's

[302] This verse has been variously rendered and explained. The versions all differ, and the Targum too; and none of them seem to render the original correctly. Blayney, following the Septuagint, has introduced corrections, but not authorized by any MSS. There is no different reading of any consequence. The literal rendering I consider to be as follows: — 15. What, as to my beloved, is in my house her doing? Is not her plotting with many? — Yea, the holy flesh do they take away from thee; When thou doest evil against me, then thou exultest. The word for "plotting" does not mean "lewdness," or "abomination," as rendered by all the versions, but devising, contriving, scheming, machinating; the reference is to the scheme of uniting the worship of God with the worship of idols. The Targum gives the idea, "they have taken counsel to sin greatly." All the versions agree in giving a Hiphil meaning to {,{יעברו cause to pass from --- to remove or take away. The ``many'' who advocated the worship of idols took away the holy flesh --- the sacrifices, and took them away from her, ``the beloved,'' as, when given to idols, they would be of no benefit. The words, {כי} ,{רעתכי} are literally, ``when thy evil is against me.'' It is a similar mode of expression with ,{קמי} ``those who rise up against me,'' (2 Samuel 22:40.) Though it was an evil against God, yet they exulted in what they did. --- Ed

wrath against you, --- ye have polluted his Temple, ye have corrupted the whole of Divine worship, ye have despised the law; and can you think that the Lord will perpetually spare you?'' But when the prophets thus assailed them, they had this answer, ``What! will God leave his own Temple, concerning which he has sworn, This is my rest for ever? Is not this the Holy Land? And is not this also his heritage and his rest? And further, are we not his flock? Are we not his children? Are we not a holy people?'' What then the Jews were wont arrogantly to claim, the Prophet concedes to them. ``So,'' he says, ``ye are a green olive, a fair and tall olive, a fruitful olive; all this I grant; but cannot God kindle a fire to burn the branches and to reduce to nothing the whole tree?'' We now then understand the design of the Prophet.

But the next verse must be joined, For Jehovah of hosts, who hath planted thee, etc.; as though he had said, ``Your beauty and whatever that is valuable in you, is it from you? Surely, all your dignity and excellency have proceeded from the gratuitous kindness of God: know ye then that nothing comes from you, but from God and from his good pleasure. Then Jehovah, who has planted you, can, when he pleases, pull up by the roots a tree which he has himself planted.''

He says that it was a green olive, fair in fruit and form How so? Because God had favored them with much honor. This similitude is found in many other places, but yet it is various as to its meaning. It might indeed with regard to God's dealings be applied to the whole people; but as hypocrites deserved to be spoiled and stripped of their privileges, so that which was offered to all in common, could only be really applied to the faithful, according to what David says,

``I am a fruitful olive in the house of God.'' (Psalm 52:8)

He then no doubt separated himself from hypocrites, as though he had said, ``Even hypocrites seek to have a place in God's Temple, and are as it were tall trees, but they are unfruitful: I shall then be a green olive in the house of God; but they will wither.'' But the Prophet, as I have said, compares the Jews to a green olive on account of their adoption and the free favor shewn to them; for God had raised them unto a high state of excellency and honor.

But after having thus spoken by way of concession, he then adds, At the sound of a great tumult, or of a great word, he will kindle his fire upon it, and broken shall be its branches Some, as I have said, render the last clause, ``and they have broken its branches.'' As to what is intended, there is nothing dubious; but if we take the verb in an active sense, something must be understood, that is, that enemies, who will be like fire, shall break its branches. [303] Then follows what I have said to be a

[303] This clause is difficult. The versions give no assistance. The word {,המולה or rather ,{המלה} is rendered ``circumcision'' by the Septuagint, ``speech' by the Vulgate, ``decree'' by the Syriac, ``tumult'' by our version, and clamor by Blayney. It occurs only in one other place, Ezekiel l:24; where it stands in apposition with the ``voice of the Almighty,'' which means there, and often elsewhere, ``thunder:'' and its meaning there is evidently the breaking of thunder or the thunderclap. It comes from ,{מל} to cut, to break, to shiver. Then the noun is literally breaking, or crashing; it is the bursting noise of thunder. The other difficulty is ,{עליה} rendered ``upon it'' in our version as well as in the early versions: but ``it'' is feminine in Hebrew, and ``of it'' after branches is masculine, the same gender with ``olive.'' None have accounted for this anomaly. Blayney has indeed made the word a participle to agree with fire, --- ``a fire mounting upwards;'' but this can hardly be admitted. I would render the verse thus, --- An olive, flourishing, beautiful in fruit, in form, Hath Jehovah called thy name: At the sound of a great thunderclap, --- Kindled hath he a fire by it; And shivered have been its branches. The verb for ``kindled'' is in Hiphil, and ``by it'' is the ``thunderclap,'' which is feminine, and ``its'' is the ``olive,'' which is masculine. Houbigant refers this passage to thunder. The past tense is used for the future. He compares the nation to a flourishing tree, and then he speaks of its destruction by a fire kindled by the breaking of a thunder: the fire is the lightning. --- Ed.

confirmation, --- that Jehovah, who had planted it, had spoken of or pronounced an evil, or a calamity against it. He thus shews that there was no reason for them to trust in their present beauty; for they had it not from themselves, but possessed it only at the will of another; for God who had planted them, could also destroy them. But on this subject more shall be said.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast deigned to gather us into thy Church, we may never turn aside in the least from the purity of thy worship, but always regard what pleases thee, and learn to direct our doings and our thoughts in obedience to thy truth, and worship thee so purely both in spirit and in external forms, that thy name may be glorified by us, and that we may especially retain that purity which thou everywhere commendest to us, so that we may be indeed the members of thy only begotten Son; and that as he has sanctified himself on our account, we may also through his Spirit be made partakers of the same sanctification, until he at length will gather us into his celestial kingdom, which he has obtained for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Forty-Seventh

We mentioned yesterday why the Prophet reminded the Jews, that they had been planted by God; it was, that they might know that they did not stand through their own power, and that they had their roots elsewhere, even in the good pleasure of God. The import of the whole is, that whenever God pleased they would instantly perish; for they stood not through their own power, but only through his favor: and this is what he confirms elsewhere, by comparing God to a potter and the people to vessels of clay. Similar is the argument which Quintilian quotes from the Medea of Ovid, ``I was able to save thee, and dost thou ask whether I can destroy thee?'' As then the Jews, relying on their long tranquinity and on their forces, thought themselves beyond the reach of danger, the Prophet ridicules this confidence; he shews how vain it was, for God had planted them, and so he could easily root them up again.

But this metaphor is very common in Scripture: yet the comparison is the more suitable when the Church is said to have been planted by God; for as a tree draws juice and strength from a hidden root, so the faithful draw their life from the hidden election of God: but this refers to the hope of eternal life. The same is meant by Christ in Matthew 15:13, when he says,

``Every planting,'' that is, every tree, ``which my Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.''

He then says, that the elect alone are planted by God, for they have their roots in the hidden life of God. But this is also extended much farther, even to the external state of the Church, according to what is said in Psalm 44:2,

``Thou hast rooted out the nations, and planted our fathers;''

as we find also in the eightieth Psalm and in other places. As God then plants his own elect, so also in gathering an external Church to himself, he is said to plant it: but they who are thus planted may be again rooted up, as the Prophet here testifies; while secret election cannot be changed.

We must then observe this difference, --- that God's children have their roots in his eternal election, respecting which there can be no repentance and no change. But the external state of the Church is also compared to a planting: yet they who flourish for a time and are full of leaves and seem also to produce some fruit, are rooted up by God's hand, when they become degenerate. And this mode of speaking is to be taken sometimes still more generally, according to what we shall see in the next chapter, and also in other parts of Scripture.

The Prophet says that God had spoken concerning the wickedness of Israel This refers to what had been taught: for though the Jews had already in part felt the just judgment of God, yet they still continued in safety. He then says that ruin was nigh them, for God had announced it by his servants. And he adds, that it was on account of the wickedness [304] of both kingdoms; and this was said in order to dissipate all their complaints; for we know that men are ever ready to clamor whenever God chastises them, as though they wished to contend with him. But the Prophet shews here, that God would deal thus severely with the Jews, because they had never ceased to provoke his wrath by their evil deeds. Hence he says, that they had done it for themselves Some render the words, ``And it shall therefore happen to them.'' But there seems to be much more force in the Prophet's words, when we say, that they had done evil for themselves, that is, to their own ruin. He adds, To provoke me, that is, their object; is to provoke me. In short, God intimates, that he would justly punish the Jews, because they had procured evil for themselves; and at the same time he points out the fountain of evil, for they had designedly provoked God by offering incense to Baal It follows ---

Jeremiah 11:18

18. And the LORD hath given me knowledge of it, and I know it: then thou shewedst me their doings.

18. Et Jehova ostendit mihi (cognoscere me fecit) et cognovi; tunc patefecisti mihi opera (vel, instituta) ipsorum.

We know that they were all very wicked; and though they were proved guilty, yet they were not wining to yield, to acknowledge and confess their fault; but they raged against God and rose up against the prophets. And as they dared not to vomit forth their blasphemies against God, they assailed his servants and wished to appear as though their contest was with them. And this is not the vice only of one age, but we find that it prevails at this day; for when we boldly reprove hidden vices, immediately the profane make a clamor and say, ``What! these divine; but who has made these things known to them? Have they this oracle from heaven?'' As though, indeed, neither the word of God nor his Spirit can shew their power, except when children become judges! But the ungodly rise up against God's servants for this end, that

[304] It is literally "evil." There is here a striking instance of the same word used in two different senses — the evil of punishment and the evil of sin. The verse is thus, — And Jehovah of hosts, who hath planted thee, Hath spoken against thee an evil, For the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah · Which they have done for themselves, By provoking me in burning incense to Baal. "For the evil," etc., is unintelligibly rendered by Blayney, "In prosecution of the evil," etc.; {{בגלל is a preposition, and is so rendered in all the early versions and the Targum: it is also so found in many other parts of Scripture. ``Which they have done? etc., may be rendered, Which they have procured for themselves; for the verb {עשה} may sometimes be thus rendered. See Genesis 12:5; Genesis 31:1. But ``which'' refers to the first ``evil,'' of which God had spoken, the evil of punishment --- Ed.

they may with impunity do this and that, and everything, except what may draw them before an earthly tribunal, and be proved by clear and many evidences

For this reason the Prophet says, that made known, to him had been the vices of his own nation; as though he had said, ``I see that you will be ready to raise an objection, as ye are wont proudly to resist all reproofs and threatenings, as though you contended only with men; but I testify to you now beforehand, that I bring nothing of my own, nor divine of myself what any one of you thinks within: but know ye that God, who knoweth the heart, has committed to me my office. He has then appointed me to be the herald of his vengeance, he has appointed me as a herald to denounce war on you. So I do not come nor act in my own name: there is, then, no reason for you to deceive yourselves, according to your usual manner, as though I presumptuously reproved you, when yet your vices are concealed, it being peculiar to God to know what is hid in the hearts of men. The recesses of the heart are indeed intricate, and great darkness is within; but God sees more dearly than men. Cease then to make this objection which ye are wont to raise against me, that I am presumptuous in bringing forth to light what lies hid in darkness, for God has appointed me to bring these commands to you: as he knows the heart, and as nothing escapes him, and as he penetrates into our thoughts and feelings, so he has also designed by his word which he has put in my mouth to render public what ye think is concealed.''

We now see the design of the Prophet: but some take a different view, that God had made known to his servant Jeremiah the impious conspiracy of which he afterwards speaks, and thus connect the two verses. But I doubt not that the Prophet intended here to shew what and how much weight belonged to his doctrine, the credit and authority of which the Jews thought of detracting by boastfully alleging that he, a mortal man, assumed too much, and announced uncertain divinations. Hence, to repel such calum --- nies, he wished to testify that he threatened them not inconsiderately, nor spoke what he supposed or conjectured, when he exposed their sins, but that he only declared faith. --- fully what had been enjoined by God and revealed also by the Holy Spirit. This is what is meant. [305] It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 11:19

19. But I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.

19. Ego autem quasi agnus, bos ductus ad immolandum (ad mactandum) et non cognovi quod contra me cogitarent cogitationes (hoc est, inirent consilia, nempe) corrumpamus ligno panera ejus (ad verbum est, corrumpamus lignum in pane; sed dicemus post de sensu verborum) et excidamus eum e terra vivorum, et nomen ejus

[305] Calvin connects this verse with the foregoing, but most with what follows. The first verb in the Septuagint is a prayer, "Lord, make known to me, and I shall know." The Syriac and Arabic are the same. The Vulgate takes the verb in the second person, "O Lord, thou hast made known," etc. Venema seems to agree in part with Calvin; he connects the first clause with the foregoing, and the second with the following verse; and this appears to be the best construction. Then the {{ו is ``when,'' as it may be rendered when followed as here by ,{{אז} ``then,'' --- When Jehovah made me to know, so that I knew these things; Then thou didst shew me their doings. That is, when Jehovah made known to him what he had previously related, he then shewed to him also the doings, or the purposes, of the men of Anathoth, which he afterwards more particularly mentions. --- Ed.

non memoretur amplius.

The Prophet adds here, as I think, that he did not retaliate private wrongs: for the Jews might, under this pretext, have rejected his doctrine, and have said, that he was moved by anger to treat them sharply and severely. And doubtless, whosoever allows his own reelings to prevail in the least degree, cannot teach in sincerity; for he who prepares himself for the prophetic office, ought to put off all the affections of the flesh, and to manifest a pure, and, so to speak, a limpid zeal, and also a calm mind, so that he may seek nothing, and have no object but the glory of God and the salvation of those to whom he is sent a teacher. Whosoever then is under the influence of private feelings cannot act otherwise than violently, so that he cannot either faithfully or profitably discharge the office of a prophet or a teacher.

Hence the Prophet now adds, in the second place, that he did not plead his own cause, nor had respect, as they say, to his own person; for he knew not what the Jews had devised against him. They who join the two verses think that they have some reason for doing so, as they suppose that the Prophet now expresses more fully what he had before briefly touched upon: but if any maturely considers the whole passage, he will easily see that Jeremiah had another object in view, and that was, to secure authority to his doctrine. The Jews probably employed two ways to discredit the holy Prophet: ``O, thou divinest! --- the same thing, as we have said, is done now by many.'' He therefore summons the Jews here before God's tribunal, and shews that it was nothing strange, that he brought to light what they thought to be hidden, because it had been revealed to him by the Spirit of God. Even Christ said the same,

``The Spirit, when he comes, shall judge the world.''
(John 16:8)

The Spirit did not appear except in the doctrine of the Apostles; but he exercised by the Apostles his own functions. The Apostle also seems to have this in view in Hebrews 4:12, when he says, that the word of God is like a two --- edged sword, which penetrates into the inmost thoughts and hidden feelings, even to the marrow and bones, so as to distinguish between thoughts and feelings.

Then the Prophet, in the first place, shews that it was nothing strange that he ascended above all human judgments, for he was endued with the authority of the Holy Spirit. And he adds, in the second place, that he was not influenced by carnal feelings, but by a pure zeal for God, for he knew not their wicked designs; and he says that he was like a lamb and an ox, or a calf. There is here no conjunction, and hence some join the two words, ``And I am like a lamb a year old:'' for the Hebrews, they say, call a lamb a year old {כבש}, cabesh, and then a ram; but this is, in my view, a forced meaning, and a copulative or a disjunctive may be supposed to be understood. I am then as a lamb or as a calf, which is led to the slaughter (to be sacrificed or kined) Here the Prophet intimates that he was not violent, as angry men are wont to be, who are excited either by indignation or great grief. He then testifies that he was moved by no such feeling, for he differed nothing from a lamb or a calf that is led to the slaughter. [306]

[306] All the early versions, and the Targum render {{אלוף as a participle or an adjective, --- ``{ἄκακον},

For the sake of amplifying, he adds, I knew not that they devised devices against me, that is, this did not come to my mind. The Prophet, indeed, might have suspected or even have known this; but as he disregarded himself, and even his own life, he testifies here that he had acted with so much simplicity as not to regard what they planned and contrived.

He then adds, Let us spoil wood in his bread They think rightly, according to my judgment, who consider that there is here a change of case; for it ought rather to be, ``Let us spoil with wood his bread:'' for that exposition is too unmeaning, ``Let us spoil or destroy wood,'' as though they spoke of a thing of no value: for what has this to do with the subject? On the contrary, if we retain, as they say, the letter, the Prophet might think that wood would be spoiled in bread, as it would become rotten: but wood in bread, except by becoming rotten, would do no harm. But doubtless the Prophet speaks here metaphorically, as David does in Psalm 69:22, when he says,

``They have put gall in my bread, and vinegar in my drink.''

Jeremiah also, in Lamentations 3:15, complains that his food was mingled with poison. Similitudes of this kind often occur; for when the very food of man is corrupted, there is no more any support for life. The meaning then is, that his enemies had acted cruelly towards the Prophet, as they sought in every way to destroy him, even by poison.

Some take wood for poison, but I know not whether that can be done. They indeed imagine that a poisonous wood is what is here meant; but this is too refined. I take the meaning to be simply this, as though they had said, ``Let us spoil with wood his food,'' that is, ``Let us give him wood instead of bread; and this, by its hardness, will hurt his teeth, ulcerate his throat, and cannot be digested so as to become nourishment.'' To spoil this bread with wood is to cause the wood to spoil the food either by its hardness or by its putridity. In this sense there is nothing ambiguous.

The ancients perverted this passage in the most childish manner when they applied it to the body of Christ. The Papists too, at this day, boast wonderfully of this allegory, though they make the most absurd use of it; for they seek to prove by it that bread is converted, or, as they say, transubstantiated into the body of Christ; and they quote Origen and Irenaeus, and others like them: ``Behold, explained is that passage of Jeremiah, let us send wood for his bread, (such is the meaning of the Vulgate) for the body of Christ has been crucified;'' and then they add, ``For he said, `Take and eat, this is my body.' ''We see how extremely absurd this is; and it must appear ridiculous even to children. But so great is the dishonesty and wantonness of the Papists, that they cast off all shame, and only boastfully pretend the authority of the ancients; and whatever Origen may have foolishly and falsely said, they will have it to be regarded as something oracular, provided their errors are thereby confirmed. But if we grant that the Prophet was a type of Christ, what has this to do with the similitude of his body, since he speaks here only of food? It is as though he

innocent,'' by the Septuagint; ``mansuetus, meek,'' by the Vulgate; simple, by the Syriac; and choice or chosen by the Targum. The word used as a verb means to teach, to train, to guide; and it seems here to be a passive participle, taught, trained, and may be rendered here docile, meek or innocent, --- But I --- as a meek lamb led to be killed was I And I knew not, that against me they had devised devices. The Septuagint render the last words ``they have thought an evil thought,'' and, ``I knew not,'' is connected with the former line thus, --- But I, as an innocent lamb led to be slain, I knew not: Against me have they thought an evil thought. But the construction in the other versions, and in the Targum, is according to the former rendering. --- Ed.

had said, that his aliment was corrupted, as it were, with poison, and that he was so cruelly treated by his enemies, that they sought to destroy him by the means of his food. [307]

It then follows, Let us cut him off from the land of the living This kind of speaking often occurs: the land or region of the living means the state of the present life. He at last adds, That his name may not be in remembrance any more In short, the Prophet meant in these words to set forth the extreme savageness with which his enemies were inflamed; for they were not content with intrigues or with open violence, but wished to destroy him by poison, and wholly to obliterate his name. it follows ---

Jeremiah 11:20

20. But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause.

20. Et, Jehova exercituum, judicans justintam, (ant, judex justitiae) scrutans (vel, inquirens) renes et cor, videam ultionem tuam de ipsis; quia tibi revelavi causam meam, (litem meam, ad verbum)

Here the Prophet, after having found that the impiety of the people was so great that he was speaking to the deaf, turns his address to God: O Jehovah of hosts, he says, who art a great Judge, who searchest the reins and the heart, may I see thy vengeance on them The Prophet seems here inconsistent with himself;, for he had before declared that he was like a lamb or a calf, as though he had offered, as they say, his life a wining sacrifice; but here he seems like one made suddenly angry, and he prays for God's vengeance. These things appear indeed to be very different; for if he had offered himself a victim, why did he not wait calmly for the event; why is he inflamed with so much displeasure? why does he thus imprecate on them the vengeance of God? But these things will well agree together, if we distinguish between private feeling and that pure and discreet zeal by which the meekness of truth can never be disturbed. For though the Prophet disregarded his own life, and was not moved by private wrongs, he was nevertheless not a log of wood; but zeal for God did eat up his heart, according to what is said in common of all the members of Christ,

``Zeal for thine house hath eaten me, and the reproaches of those who upbraided thee have fallen on me.'' (Psalm 69:9; John 2:17; Romans 15:3)

The Prophet then had previously freed himself from all suspicion by saying that he was prepared for the slaughter, as though he were a lamb or a calf; but he now shews that he was, notwithstanding, not destitute of zeal for God. Here then he gives vent to this new fervor when he says, ``O Jehovah, who searchest the reins and the heart, may I see thy vengeance on them.''

[307] But the best meaning is that given by the Syriac, and has been adopted in our version, and by Gataker, Venema, Henry, Horsley, Scott, and Adam Clarke, — "Let us destroy the tree with its fruit;" that is, the Prophet and his prophecy. "In this case," says Horsley, "the man is the tree; his doctrine the fruit." But there seems to be an allusion in the words to "the olive" mentioned in Jeremiah 11:16, which was threatened with destruction: and Jeremiah's enemies, adopting his simile, by way of irony apply it to himself: "Well, thou comparest us to an olive devoted to ruin; we shall now deal with thee accordingly: thou art a tree, and we shall cut thee down and destroy thee and all the fruit thou bearest." The whole verse I would render as follows, — 19. And I — as a meek lamb led to be killed was I And I knew not that against me they had devised these devices: — "Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, Yea, let us cut him down from the land of the living; And his name, let it be remembered no more." — Ed.

The Prophet, no doubt, was free from every carnal feeling, and pronounced what we read through the influence of the Spirit. Since then the Holy Spirit dictated this prayer to the holy man, he might still have offered himself a voluntary sacrifice, while yet he justly appealed to God's tribunal to take vengeance on the impiety of a reprobate people; for he did not indiscriminately include them all, but imprecated God's judgment on the abandoned and irreclaimable.

It is indeed true, that we may regard the Prophet as predicting what he knew would happen to his people: and some give this explanation; they consider it as a prediction only and no prayer. But they are terrified without reason at the appearance of inconsistency, as they think it inconsistent in the Prophet to desire the perdition of his own people: for he might have wished it through the influ ence of that zeal, as I have said, which the Holy Spirit had kindled in his heart, and according to the words which the same Spirit had dictated.

He calls God the Judge of righteousness; and he so called him, that he might wipe away and dissipate the disguises in which the Jews exulted when they sought to prove their own cause. By this then he intimates that they gained no --- thing by their evasions, for these would vanish like smoke when they came before God's tribunal. He, in short, means that they could not stand before the judgment of God. He then adds, that God searches the reins and the heart He says this, not only that he might testify his own integrity, as some suppose, but that he might rouse hypocrites. For he intimates that they stood safe before men, as they concealed their wickedness, but that when they came before God's tribunal another kind of account must then be given; for God would prove and try them, as the word {בחן}, bechen, signifies: he would search the ruins and the heart, that is, their most inward feelings; For the Scripture means by reins all the hidden feelings or affections.

He says, For to thee have I made known my judgment The Prophet, no doubt, appeals here to God's tribunal, because he saw that he was destitute of every patronage --- he saw that all were against him. Few pious men indeed were left, as we have elsewhere seen; but the Prophet speaks here of the mass of the people. As then there was no one among the people who did not then openly oppose God, so that there was no defender of equity and justice, he turns to God and says, ``I have made known my cause to thee;'' as though he had said, ``O Lord, thou knowest what my cause is, and I do not act dissemblingly; for I serve thee faithfully and sincerely, as thou knowest. Since it is so, may I see thy vengeance on them.'' [308]

Now, we are taught in this passage, that even were the whole world united to suppress the light of truth, Prophets and teachers ought not to despond, nor to rely on the judgment of men, for that is a false and deceptive balance; but that they ought to persevere in the discharge of their office, and to be satisfied with this alone --- that they render their office approved of God, and exercise it as in his presence. We may

[308] The beginning of the verse is differently rendered: "O Lord," in the vocative case, by the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Syriac; "The Lord," by the Arabic and Targum. All the versions agree as to the imprecation, "May I see — {ἴδοιμι} --- videam:'' but the Targum has, ``I shall see;'' and so it is rendered by Gataker, Venema, Scott, and Adam Clarke. The verb is future, but the future in Hebrew has sometimes the meaning of the optative or the subjunctive, as well as of the imperative. But the future is the most suitable here; for the {ו} before ``Jehovah'' will not allow it to be in the vocative case. The verse then would be as follows, --- 20. But Jehovah of hosts, who art a righteous judge, The trier of the reins and of the heart, I shall see thy vengeance on them; For on thee have I devolved my cause. ``Jehovah of hosts'' is a nominative absolute --- a form of expression very common in the Prophets. --- Ed.

also learn, that the ungodly and hypocrites in vain make shifts and evasions, while they try to elude the authority of the Prophets; for they will at length be led before God's tribunal. When therefore we find teachers rightly and sincerely discharging their office, let us know that we cannot possibly escape the judgment of God except we submit to their teaching. And Prophets and pastors themselves ought to learn from this passage, that though the whole world, as I have already said, were opposed to them, they ought not yet to cease from their perseverance, nor be changeable, but to consider it enough that God approves of their cause. It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 11:21-23

21. Therefore thus saith the LORD of the men of Anathoth, that seek thy life, saying, Prophesy not in the name of the LORD, that thou die not by our hand:

21. Propterea sic dicit Jehova ad viros Anathoth, qui qumrunt anitaare tuam, dieendo, Ne prophetes in horninc Jehow, et non morieris in manu nostra, (hoc est, ne moriaris manu nostra)

22. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will punish them: the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and their daughters shall die by famine:

22. Propterea sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Ecce ego vlsitans (visitabo) super eos; adolescentes eorum monentur gladio, filii eorum et filiae eorum morientur fame:

23. And there shall be no remnant of them: for I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth, even the year of their visitation.

23. Et residuum non erit ipsis, (hoc est, nihil erit ipsis residuum) quia re hire faciam malum super homines Anathoth anno visitationis ipsorum (alii vertunt, annum, sod male, meo judicio)

The Prophet here expressly denounces vengeance on his own people: for we have seen at the beginning of this book that he belonged to the town of Anathoth. Now it appears from this passage, that the holy man had not only to contend with the king and his courtiers, and the priests, who were at Jerusalem; but that when he betook himself to a corner to live quietly with his own people, he had even there no friend, but that all persecuted him as an enemy. We hence see how miserable was the condition of the Prophet; for he had no rest, even when he sought retirement and fled to his own country. That he was not safe even there, is a proof to us how hardly God exercised and tried him for the many years in which he performed his prophetic office.

As the citizens of Anathoth had grievously sinned, so he denounces on them an especial calamity. It is indeed certain that the Prophet was not kindly received at Jerusalem; nay, he met there, as we shall hereafter see, with enemies the most cruel: but when he hoped for some rest and relaxation in his own country, he was even there received as we find here. This is the reason why God commanded him to threaten the citizens of Anathoth with destruction. I cannot finish the whole today.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou remindest us in thy word of our many vices and sins, we may learn to direct our eyes and thoughts to thee, and never think that we have to do with a mortal being, but that we may anticipate thy judgment: and may we learn so to examine all our thoughts and try our feelings, that no hypocrisy

may deceive us, and that we may not sleep in our sins; but that being really and truly awakened, we may humble ourselves before thee, and so seek thy pardon, that when we he down in true repentance, thou mayest absolve us in thy mercy, through the virtue of that sacrifice by which thine only --- begotten Son has once for all reconciled us to thee. --- Amen.

Chapter 12

Lecture Forty-Eighth

CHAPTER 12

Jeremiah 12:1

1. Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?

1. Justus es, Jehova, si contendam teeurn (st litigem, vel, quando litigabo) tamen judicia loquar teeurn (hoe est, disceptabojure teeurn:) Quousque via impiorum prosperabitur (re/, feliciter babebit) quieti sunt omnes transgredientes transgresstone?

The minds of the faithful, we know, have often been greatly tried and even shaken, on seeing all things happening successfully and prosperously to the despisers of God. We find this complaint expressed at large in Psalm 73. The Prophet there confesses that he had well --- nigh fallen, as he had been treading in a slippery place; he saw that God favored the wicked; at least, from the appearance of things, he could form no other judgment, but that they were loved and cherished by God. We know also that the ungodly become thus hardened, according to what is related of Dionysius, who said that God favored the sacrilegious; for he had sailed in safety after having plundered temples, and committed robberies in many places; thus he laughed to scorn the forbearance of God. And hence Solomon says, That when all things are in a state of confusion in the world, men's minds are led to despise God, as they think that all things happen on the earth by chance, and that God has no care for mankind. (Ecclesiastes 9) But with regard to the faithful, as I have already said, when they see the ungodly proceeding in all wickedness and evil deeds with impunity, and claiming the world to themselves, while God is, as it were, conniving at them, their minds cannot be otherwise than grievously distressed. And this is the view which interpreters take of this passage; that is, that he was disturbed with the prosperous condition of the wicked, and expostulated with God, as Habakkuk seems to have

done at the beginning of the first chapter; but he appears to me to have something higher in view.

We have said elsewhere, that when the Prophets saw that they spent their labor in vain on the deaf and the intractable, they turned their addresses to God as in despair. I hence doubt not but that it was a sign of indignation when the Prophet addressed God, having as it were given up men, inasmuch as he saw that he spoke to the deaf without any benefit. Here then he rouses the minds of the people, that they might know at length that he could not convince them that they were doomed to ruin by God. For when Jeremiah spoke to them, all his threatenlugs were scorned and laughed at; hence he now addresses God himself, as though he had said, that he would have nothing more to do with them, as he had labored wholly in vain. This then seems to have been the object of the Prophet.

But lest the ungodly should have an occasion for calumniating, he intended so to regulate his discourse as to give them no ground for cavining. Hence he makes this preface, --- that God is, or would be just, though he contended with him This order ought to be carefully observed; for when we give way in the least to our passions, we are immediately carried away, and we cannot restrain ourselves within proper limits and continue in a right course. As soon then as those thoughts, which may draw us away frc, in the fear of God, and lessen the reverence due to him, creep in, we ought to fortify our minds and to set up mounds, lest the devil should draw us on farther than we wish to go. For instance, when any one in the present day sees things in disorder in the world, he begins to reason thus freely with himself, ``What does this mean? How is it that God suffers licentiousness to prevail so long? Why is it thathe thus conceals himself?'' As soon then as these thoughts creep in, if we possess the true principle of religion, we shall try to restrain these wanderings, and to bring ourselves to the right way; but this will be no easy matter; for as soon as we pass over the boundaries, there is no restraint, no limitation. Hence the Prophet wisely begins by saying, Thou art just, though I contend with thee It is not only for the sake of others he speaks thus, but also to restrain in time his own feelings and not to allow himself more than what is right. We must still remember what I have said, --- that the Prophet here directs his words to God, in order that the Jews might know that they were left as it were without hope, and were unworthy that he should spend any more labor on them.

He says, And yet I will speak judgments with thee; that is, I will dispute according to the limits of what is right and just. Some indeed take judgments for punishments, as though the Prophet wished the people to be punished; but of this I do not approve, for it is a strained view. To speak judgments, means nothing else than to discuss a point in law, to plead according to law, as it is commonly said. By saying, ``I will legally contend,'' he does not throw off the restraint which he has before put on himself, but asks it as a matter of indulgence to set before God what might seem just and right to all. 'David, or the Prophet who was the author of that psalm which we have already quoted, (Psalm 73) even when he expressed his own feelings and ingenuously confessed his own infirmity, yet made a preface similar to what is found here. But he there speaks as it were abruptly, ``Yet thou art just;'' he uses the same

word {אך}, ak, as Jeremiah does; but here it is put in the last clause, and there at the beginning of the sentence, ``Yet good is God to Israel, even to those who are upright in heart.'' The Prophet no doubt was agitated and distracted in various ways, but he afterwards restrained himself. But it was otherwise with Jeremiah; for he does not confess here that he was tried, as almost all the faithful are wont to be; but as I have already said, he advisedly, and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, addressed his words to God; for he intended to rouse the Jews, that they might understand that they were rejected, and rejected as unworthy of having their salvation cared for any longer.

By saying then, Yet will I plead with thee, he doubtless intended to touch the Jews to the quick, as they were so extremely stupid. ``Behold,'' he says, ``I will yet contend with God, whether he will forgive you?'' We now see the real meaning of the Prophet; for the Jews in vain brought forward their own prosperity as a proof that God was propitious to them; for this was nothing else than to abuse his forbearance. Jeremiah intended in short to shew, that though God might pass by them for a time, yet the wicked ought not on this account to flatter themselves, for his indulgence is no proof of his love; but, on the contrary, as we shall see, a heavier vengeance is accumulated, when the ungodly increasingly harden themselves while God is treating them with indulgence. This then is the reason why the Prophet says, that he would plead with God; he had regard more to men than to God. He yet does not set up the judgments of men against the absolute power of God, as the sophists under the Papacy do, who ascribe such absolute power to God as perverts all judgment and all order; this is nothing less than sacrilege.

Now the Prophet does not call God to an account, as though there was no rule by which he regulated his works and governed the world. But by judgments he means, as I have said, what God had declared in his law; for it is written,

``Cursed is every one who continueth not,'' etc.,

(Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10)

Now then as the Jews were transgressors of the law, nay, as they ceased not to provoke God to wrath by their vices, they ought surely, according to the ordinary course of justice, to have been immediately destroyed. Hence the Prophet says here, I will plead with thee; that is, ``Hadst thou dealt with this people as they deserved, they must have been often reduced to nothing.'' At the same time he had no doubt, as we have said, respecting the rectitude of the divine judgment; only he had regard to those men who flattered themselves, and securely indulged themselves in their vices, because God diid not immediately execute those punishments with which he threatens the transgressors of his law. [309]

[309] "Emboldened," says Blayney, "as it should seem, by the success of his prayers against the men of Anathoth, the Prophet ventures freely, though with professions of confidence in the divine justice, to expostulate with God concerning the prosperity of wicked men in general, whose punishment he solicits, attesting the mischiefs that were continually brought on the land by their unrestrained wickedness." I would render the verse thus, — Righteous art thou, Jehovah; Though I should dispute with thee; Yet of judgments will I speak to thee, — How is it.? the way of the wicked, it prospers; Secure are all the dissemblers of dissimulation. Perhaps the fourth line might be rendered thus, — Why; the way of the wicked, it prospers. The order of the words will not admit it to be rendered otherwise. Blayney renders the last line as follows: — At ease are all they who deal very perfidiously. The last words literally are, "all the cloakers of cloaking," or, "all the coverers of covering." But according to the secondary meaning of the

Hence he says, How long shall the way of the wicked prosper? for secure are all they who by transgression transgress; that is, who are not only tainted with small vices, but who are extremely wicked. They then who openly rejected all religion and all care for righteousness, how was it that they were secure and that their way prospered? We now then more clearly understand what I have stated, --- that the Prophet turned his words to God, that he might more effectually rouse the stupid, so that they might know that they were in a manner summoned by this expostulation before the celestial tribunal. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 12:2

2. Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.

2. Plantasti eos, etiam radieem egerunt; prodierunt, etiam fecerunt frueturn (produxerunt fructum:) prope es in ore ipsorum, et procul es a renibus ipsorum (hoc est, ab intimo affectu, renes enim alibi dixinms accipi pro affectibus arcanis)

When the happiness of the wicked disturbs our minds, two false thoughts occur to us, --- either that this world is ruled by chance and not governed by God's providence, or that God does not perform the office of a good and righteous judge when he suffers light to be so blended with darkness. But the Prophet here takes it as granted, that the world is governed by God's providence; he therefore does not touch the false notion, which yet harasses pious minds, that fortune governs the world. Well known are these words, ``I am disposed to think that there are no gods.'' [310] It was thought there were no gods who ruled the world, because he died who deserved a longer life. And the wisest heathens have thus spoken, ``I see fortune, which yet no reason governs; I see fortune, which prevails more than reason in these matters.'' [311] But the Prophet, who was far removed from these profane notions, held this truth, that the world is governed by God; and he now asks, How it was that God exercised so long a forbearance? The ungodly, the thoughtless, and inconsiderate might have said that this forbearance was far too scanty. But the Prophet, as I have said, clearly describes what the Jews deserved.

Then he says, that they had been planted by God; for they could not have prospered had not God blessed them. The metaphor of planting, as we have before seen, often occurs, but in a different sense. When the celestial life is the subject, God is said to have planted his own elect, because their salvation is sure. He is said also to have planted his people in the land which he had given to them as an heritage. Now, when he speaks of the reprobate, the Prophet says that they had been planted by God, and for these reasons, because they flourished, because they produced leaves, and because they brought forth some fruit. In short, as Scripture, for various reasons, compares men to trees, so it employs the word planting in a corresponding sense. The Prophet indeed says that the ungodly are supported by God, and this is certain; for were not God to deal kindly with them for a time, they could not but in-

word {{בגד the phrase would be, ``all the dissemblers of dissimulation.'' The version of the Septuagint is, ``all who prevaricate prevarications.'' What is meant evidently is, that they were hypocrites, and that by hypocrisy they covered their hypocrisy, --- a true and a striking representation. --- Ed

[310] Ovid, Eleg. 8.

[311] Ovid, Eleg. 8.

stantly perish. Hence their prosperity is a proof of God's indulgence. But the Prophet expresses his wonder at this, not so much through his own private feeling, as for the purpose of shewing to the Jews that it was a strange thing that they were tolerated so long by God, as they had a hundred times deserved to be wholly destroyed.

Yea, he says, they have taken root By this metaphor he means their continued happiness. He says also, that they had advanced aloft; that is, were raised high and increased. [312] He then adds, that they had brought forth fruit The fruit of which he speaks was nothing else than their offspring; as though he had said, that the ungodly were not only prosperous to the end of life, but that they also propagated their kind, so that they had children surviving them, so that their families became celebrated. But the import of the whole is this, --- that God not only endured the ungodly for a time, but extended his indulgence to many ages, so that their descendants continued in the same wealth, dignity, and power, with their dead fathers.

He afterwards adds, Thou indeed art nigh in their mouth, but thou art far from their reins Jeremiah no doubt intended to anticipate them; for he knew that the Jews would have objections in readiness, --- ``What art thou, who summonest us here before God's tribunal, and who pleadest with God that he may not too patiently bear with us? Are not we his servants? Do we not daily offer sacrifices in the Temple? Are we not circumcised? Do we not bear in our bodies the sign of our adoption? Do we not possess a kingdom and a priesthood? Now, these are pledges of God's paternal love towards us, But thou wouldest have thyself to be more just than God himself. Can God deny himself? He has bound his faithfulness to us by the sign of circumcision, by the Temple, by the kingdom, by the priesthood, and by the sacrifices; and when we do anything amiss, then our sins are expiated by sacrifices and washings, and other rites.''

As then the Prophet knew that the Jews were wont thus loquaciously and perversely to defend their own cause, he says, ``O, I see what they will say to me, even that which they are wont to say; for the common burden of their song is, that they are the children of Abraham, that they sacrifice, and have other ways of pacifying God, and then that they possess a priesthood and a kingdom. These things,'' he says, ``are well known to me: but, O Lord, thou knowest that they are mere words; thou knowest that they act fallaciously, and that they do nothing but declare what is false when they pretend these vain shifts and evasions; for thou knowest the heart, ({καρδιογνώστης};) thou therefore understandest that there is nothing right or sincere in their mouth; for their reins are far from thee, and thou also art far from their reins.'' We hence also perceive with more certainty the truth of what I have stated, --- that the Prophet here pleads with God, in order that the Jews might know that they could in no way be absolved when they came before God's tribunal. It, follows ---

[312] The verb is {{ילכו rendered ``proficiunt --- proceed or advance,'' by the Vulgate and Syriac. The Septuagint must have read ,{ילדו} as the version is, they have brought forth children, which is wholly inconsistent with the simile of a tree. To ``advance in growth,'' as Blayney renders it, is what is clearly meant. The Targum is a paraphrase, and the simile is wholly left out. To ``become rich'' is the corresponding expression, which gives the meaning. The ,{גם} which occurs twice, would be better rendered ``yea,'' as in our version, than ``also,'' as by Blaney, --- Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root; They thrive, yea, they have produced fruit: Nigh art thou to their mouth, But far from their reins. ``They thrive,'' is literally ``they go on,'' that is, after having rooted, or taken root. The ``reins'' stand for the affections --- fear, reverence, love, etc. --- Ed.

Jeremiah 12:3

3. But thou, O LORD, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart toward thee: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter.

3. Et tu, Jehova, cognoscis me (cognovisti me), videbis me (vides me), et probasti cor meum tecum (hoc est, probasti quale sit cor meum apud to, vel, coram to:) extrahe eos tanquam oves ad mactationem, et praepara eos ad diem occisionis.

The Prophet is not here solicitous about himself, but, on the contrary, undertakes the defense of his own office, as though he had said that, he faithfully discharged the office committed to him by God. Though then the Jews, and even the citizens of Anathoth, his own people, unjustly persecuted him, yet he was not excited by private wrongs; and though he disregarded these entirely, he yet could not give up the defense of his office. He then does not speak here of his own private feelings, but only claims for himself faithfulness and sincerity before God in performing his office as a teacher; as though he had said that he executed what God had commanded him to do, and that therefore the Jews contended not with a mortal being, but with God himself.

Hence he says, But thou, Jehovah, knowest me and seest me, and triest my heart towards thee; that is, thou knowest how sincerely I serve thee, and endeavor to fulfin my vocation, and thus to obey thy command. He afterwards glories over them as a conqueror, and says, Draw them forth as sheep for the day of sacrificing, prepare them for slaughter Here no doubt the Prophet intended not only to touch, but sharply to wound the Jews, in order that they might know that they had been hitherto secure to no purpose, and to their own ruin, because God had spared them. They who consider that the Prophet was himself troubled, because he saw that God was propitious and kind to the ungodly, think that, with reference to himself, he took comfort from this, --- that the judgment of God was nigh at hand; but I doubt not but that the Prophet had regard to the Jews, as I have already reminded you. When, therefore, he saw that they were torpid in their delusions, he intended to rouse their sensibilities by saying, ``I see how it is, O Lord; thou dost indeed concede thyself; but what else is thy purpose but that they should be fattened for the day of slaughter?''

He says, first, Thou wilt draw them out: others read, ``Thou wilt lead them forth,'' and quote a passage in Judges 20:32, where {נתק} nutak, is taken in this sense. The word properly means to draw out with force, as when a tree is pulled up, or when any one is drawn out against his will; and this is the sense most suitable to the present passage. Thou wilt then draw them out; that is, thou wilt suddenly draw them out to slaughter. He then intimates that there was no reason for the Jews to be dormant in their prosperity, for God could in a moment act against them; and as the pain of one in labor is sudden, so also, when the wicked say, Peace and security, their ruin will come suddenly upon them. (1 Thessalonians 5:3) This then is what the Prophet now means: but he goes on in his way of teaching; for he does not address men as they were all deaf, but speaks to God himself, that his doctrine might be more effectual: Thou then wilt draw them out, and do thou prepare them; for it is a prayer: do thou

then prepare them for the day of slaughter [313]

The last expression ought especially to be noticed. The Prophet indeed seems here in an excited feeling to imprecate ruin on the people; but there is no doubt but that he was here discharging the duty of his office, for he was the herald of God's vengeance. He therefore asks God to execute what he had commanded him to denounce on the people. He had often promulgated what God had resolved to do to them, but he had moved no one: he now then asks God to fulfin what he had foretold the Jews --- that they should shortly perish, because they refused to repent.

We may also learn from this passage, --- that when the ungodly accumulate wealth, they are in a manner fattened. When oxen plough, and sheep are fed that they may bear wool and bring forth young, they are not fed that they may grow fat, and a moderate quantity of food will suffice them; but when any one intends to prepare sheep or oxen for the slaughter, he fattens them. So then the feeding of them is nothing else than the fattening of them; and the fattening of them is a preparation for their slaughter. I have therefore said that a very useful doctrine is included in this form of speaking; for when we see that plenty of wealth and power abound with the ungodly and the despisers of God, we see that they are in a manner thus fined with good things, that they may grow fat: --- it is fattening or cramming. Let us then not bear it in that they are thus covered with their own fatness, for they are prepared for the day of slaughter. It follows ---

Jeremiah 12:4

4. How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end.

4. Quousque lugebit terra.et herba omnis agri arescet prae malitia habitantium in ea? defecit bestiae (hoc est, consumptae sunt besiae) et avis (hoe est, aves, est enallage numeri tam in verbo quam in nomine;) quia dixerunt, Non videbit novissimum nostrum (vel, finem nostrum)

Jeremiah confirms the former sentence and more strongly reproves the Jews, who still continued obstinately to despise what he had said: ``What do you mean, he says? for God's judgment appears as to brute beasts and birds; and what have birds and sheep and oxen deserved? Ye know that there is no fault in miserable animals, and yet the curse of God is through them set before you; ye see that God is offended with brute animals, but the fault is doubtless in you. And will God spare you, when he has already begun, and long ago begun to inflict punishment on innocent animals? how can he hear with you to the end, who are full of so many and the most atrocious sins?'' This then is a confirmation of his former doctrine.

And hence we also learn that he did not speak for his own sake, nor express his

[313] This verse, according to the tenses of the verbs, is as follows: — But thou, Jehovah, thou hast known me; Thou seest me, and triest my heart towards thee: Pull them out as sheep for the sacrifice, And set them apart for the day of slaughter. It is evident that “seest,” which is here in the future tense, is to be taken as expressing a present act. It would be so rendered in Welsh, — Ond ti Jehova, adwaenaist vi; Gweli vi, a phrovi, vy nghalon tuag atat. God had known him, he was still seeing him, and approved of his heart before him, as the Septuagint express the words. To prove here, or to “try,” means a trial by which a thing is found to be genuine. Blayney gives the meaning by a paraphrase, — Thou canst discern by trial my heart to be with thee. — Ed.

own private feelings, but that he defended the doctrine which he had announced, that the Jews might know that God was angry with them, and that they were not to expect that he would always conceal himself, though he for a time connived at them.

How long, he says, shall the land mourn? or, How long should the land mourn? for thus it ought to be rendered; and should every herb become dry? ``What!'' he says, ``is not God's judgment visible in herbs and flocks and beasts and birds? Since it is so, and the whole fault is in you, shall ye be spared? Will God pour forth his whole wrath on herbs, on sheep, and on cattle? and shall you be at the same time exempted from his judgment?''

And more clearly still does he express his meaning, when he says, Because they have said, He shall not see our end Here the Prophet briefly shews that the wrath of God was seen in herbs as well as in brute animals, because he was despised by the people. Since then evil proceeded from them, should it not return on their own heads? It could not surely be otherwise. But he speaks expressly of the end; for the Jews were so stupified by their prosperity, that they thought that God was no longer adverse to them: ``Ha! what have we to do with God? we are already beyond the reach of danger.'' As then they thus perversely rejected God, he upbraids them with the thought, that they were to give no account to God. It is not indeed probable that they openly, or with a full mouth, as they say, vomited forth such a blasphemy; but we know that Scripture often speaks in this manner, ``God shall not see;'' ``God will not look on Jacob.'' Though the ungodly did not speak so insolently, yet they no doubt thought thati they could set up many hinderances to prevent God's hand from reaching them. Hence Jeremiah, according to the usual manner of Scripture, justly lays this to their charge, --- that they thought that they were now as it were unknown to God and beyond the reach of his care, so that he would not see their end; in other words, that they had no concern with God, because they were on all sides so well fortified, that the hand of God could not reach them. [314]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that though the same hardness is inbred in us as in thine ancient people, we may not become rooted in it; but do thou rouse us by thy Spirit, that we may suffer ourselves to be gently governed by thyi word, and be so touched by thy threatenings, that we may not defer the time whenever thou an --- nouncest to us thy judgment, but strive to be immediately reconciled to thee: and as there is no other way of being reconciled except through thine only --- begotten Son, may we in true faith embrace the favor which thou offerest to us in thy gospel, and also devote ourselves wholly to thee, being truly penitent of our sins; and as we ought to make progress to the end of life, may we strive more and more to put off all the lusts of our flesh, until we shall at length be made partakers of that glory which thine only

[314] Both Gataker and Venema regard the meaning of the last clause differently. Here ends the expostulation of Jeremiah; and they consider that he mentions here what his persecutors said of him, that he would not see their end, or their ruin, which he had foretold. Were {,{כ as in the first verse, rendered ``though,'' the connnection would be more natural, --- How long shall mourn the land And the grass of every field wither? For the evil of those who dwell in it, Swept away has been the beast and the bird, Though they have said, ``Hewill not see our end.'' The third line connects better with what follows than with what precedes it; and it is so rendered in the Syriac. The word for ``beast,'' though in a plural form, is used elsewhere as a singular, Psalm 73:22; and so it is here, and so rendered by the Vulgate and the Targum. --- Ed.

--- begotten Son has prepared for us. --- Amen.

Lecture Forty-Ninth

Jeremiah 12:5

5. If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

5. Quia (vel, si) eumpeditibus (significat proprie pedes, sed translative significat etiam pedites; si ergo cum peditibus) cucurristi et fatigarunt te, quomodo miscebis te equitibus? et in terra pacis tu confisus es, quid facies (vel, quomodo facies, vel faceres) in altitudine Jordanis?

Many think that God here checks the boldness of Jeremiah, as though he had exceeded the limits of moderation when he contended with God, as we have seen, because he patiently endured the reprobate and did not immediately punish them. Hence they elicit this meaning from rite words, ``Thou hast hitherto been contending with mortals, and hast confessed that thou didst maintain an unequal contest; dost thou dare now to assail me, who am far greater than the whole world? Footmen have wearied thee, who walk on earth; but thou engagest now with horsemen, that is, with me.''

But I have already shewn that the Prophet did not undertake this cause presumptuously, nor was he carried away by blind zeal when he disputed with God, but that he thus spoke through a divine fervor: he was indeed influenced by God, in order that he might by this mode of speaking more fully rouse an obstinate people. There was therefore no need to check hint; for his object was no other than to shew by a lively representation, that God would be the Judge of the Jews, who had despised his teaching and esteemed it as nothing.

Some think that a comparison is made between the citizens of Anathoth and the citizens of Jerusalem: they hence suppose that Jeremiah is encouraged, lest he should succumb under the temptations which awaited him; as though it was said, ``Thy citizens or thy people are like footmen; thou seest now how much they have wearied thee, for thou canst not bear their insolence: what then will become of thee, when thou comest to Jerusalem? for as there is more power there, so there is more arrogance; thou wilt have to contend with the king and his court, with the priests and with the people, who are blinded by their own splendor: horsemen will be there, and thou wilt have all equestrian contest. Thou mayest hence see how thou art to prepare thyself; for these things are only the beginnings, and yet thou complainest of them.''

But when I maturely weigh all things, I come to another opinion, which both Jerome snd Jonathan [315] have suggested, and yet obscurely, and so confusedly that the meaning cannot be correctly understood, and especially for this reason, because they did not state the exposition which we have hitherto given; hence the meaning of what they have said does not seem suitable. But the Prophet, I doubt not, here reproves the people and condemns their presumption, because they thought themselves furnished with so many defences that they despised the judgment of God.

[315] The author of the Targum — the Chaldee Paraphrase. — Ed.

I regard then this verse as spoken in the person of God, for hitherto Jeremiah has been the accuser, and arraigned the whole people as guilty before God, and was also the herald of his judgment. Now that what he says might have more weight, God himself comes forth and says, Thou hast hitherto run with footmen, and thou hast been wearied, how will it be when thou comest to an equestrian contest? he intimates by these words that a much greater outrage was at hand than what the Jews had already experienced. Their country had been oppressed, their city had been exposed to extreme peril, there had been as it were a pedestrian conflict; but God now intimates that a heavier storm was nigh at hand, for horsemen would assail them, because the Chaldeans and the Assyrians were to come with much greater violence to lay waste the whole country and to destroy the city itself.

This then is not addressed to the Prophet, but to the people; as though it was said, that the Jews had but a slight contest with the Assyrians, and yet were conquered and oppressed by many calamities; but that they would have now to fight more seriously, as a greater violence was impending over them: how then, he says, canst thou contend with horsemen? [316]

He then adds, In the land of peace thou trustest, and how wilt thou do in the rising of Jordan? The land of peace is commonly taken for the town of Anathoth, where the Prophet ought to have enjoyed a quiet life, as he lived there among his relations and friends. The rising of Jordan is also taken as signifying violent waves; but this has nothing to do with the subject. Were I to approve of this view, I would rather take the rising of Jordan as meaning its fountain, for we know that Jordan rose from Mount Lebanon, north of Jerusalem: so then would I interpret the words, and the explanation would be plausible. But as I feel assured that the words are not addressed to the Prophet, but to the people, I doubt not but that the land of peace is the land open to plunder, that is, not protected. As that is called the land of war, which is surrounded by alefences, and fortified by towers, moats, and ramparts; so that is called the land of peace, which is not capable of repelling enemies. The Prophet derided the Jews, because they swelled with so much arrogance, though they possessed no fortresses: ``Ye are,'' he says, ``in the land of peace, having no means to carry on war, and possessing no forces to resist your enemies: as then ye swell with so much pride in your penury and want, what would become of you, were you in the rising of Jordan? that is, were your cities on the banks of Jordan, where it widely spreads, so as to prevent any access?'' Rising here means height or largeness: for {גאון} gaun, signifies pride, and metaphorically it means the highest or chief glory. ``What wouldest thou do,'' he says, ``in the largeness of Jordan? that is,

[316] Most commentators agree in the previous exposition, — that a comparison is made between the persecution which Jeremiah experienced from his countrymen at Anathoth, and the persecution he was to expect at Jerusalem. So thought the Jewish commentators, Grotius, Venema, Gataker, Henry, Scott, Adam Clarke, and Blayney. It must however, be added, that Jerome and Horsley were of the same opinion with Calvin: but the most obvious and natural meaning seems to be the former. The rendering of Blayney is as follows, — If thou hast run with footmen, and they have wearied thee, Then how wilt thou chafe thyself with horses? More literally, — If with footmen thou hast run, and they have tired thee, Then how wilt thou heat thyself with horses? "Horses" may indeed be rendered horsemen, as "feet" in the previous line is rendered footmen. As to the verb "heat thyself," the versions and the Targum differ, but the word in Hebrew is plain enough; it is {{חרה to heat, to burn, or to be warm or hot, in Hithpael. To ``contend'' has been taken from the Vulgate. --- Ed..

were that river a defense to you against enemies? for there is nothing that can hinder your enemies from coming to your gates, from breaking down your walls by warlike instruments; and ye glory: how great is your madness, for ye do not consider how weak you are?'' We hence see that in the whole of this verse the foolish boastings of the people are beaten down; for they were proud without a cause, as they were destitute of all defences and auxiliaries. This then is what I consider to be the real meaning. [317] It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 12:6

6. For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.

6. Certe etiam fratres tui et domus patris tui, etiam ipsi perfide agunt in te, etiam ipsi clamant post te plena voce (vel, turmatim, {אלמ} enim varie exponitur;) ne confides ipsis, etiam si loquantur ad te (hoc est, tecum) bona (id est, amice tecum loquantur.)

Here God addresses his Prophet, in order to confirm the whole of what we have observed. Jeremiah's object was, as we have said, to set forth the judgment of God: he therefore undertook the part of art accuser, and shewed how intolerable was the impiety of the whole people. He afterwards shewed that he was a conqueror in the cause. And now God himself speaks: he first indeed reproves the people and condemns their insane presumption; and then he addresses the Prophet himself, as though he had said, ``Thou hast faithfully pleaded my cause, and as thine own people are all perfidious, there is no reason for thee to doubt but that I will be thy defender.''

The Prophet no doubt was commanded to preach and to write in God's name; and yet he had regard to the people, who would have hardened themselves against his preaching, had he not more fully set forth the dreadful judgment of God. Hence he says, Surely even thy brethren and the house of thy father, etc.: it is an amplification, when he says, that not only the citizens of Jerusalem and the whole people had conspired against the Prophet, but also his own relations and friends; Even thy brethren, he says, and the house of thy father, even these, etc. We see how emphatically God speaks; and there is an implied comparison between the citizens of Anathoth and the rest of the Jews, for they dealt not with a brother and one of themselves with any more courtesy than those not related to him. He repeats for the third time, Even these have cried after thee; that is, ``They have so inimically persecuted

[317] As in the previous clause, so in this, most interpreters are opposed to Calvin. The contrast here is between a quiet state and great troubles. If Jeremiah complained, when among his connections at Anathoth, what could he do when troubles, like the swelling of Jordan, overflowed the land? And this view is confirmed by the verse which follows, — Blayney, following the Vulgate, renders the passage thus, — And though in the land of peace thou mayest have confidence, Yet how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan? But rather as follows, — And in the land of peace thou art secure; But how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan? That is, "Thou complainest though living secure in a land which enjoys peace and is not harassed with war: what then wilt thou do when the troubles of war shall come over the land like the overflowings of Jordan?" or, according to some, "Thou complainest though living in retirement among thine own people, where thou didst expect rest and peace, what wilt thou do when exposed to the violent persecutions of the great and powerful?" the swelling of Jordan being considered a proverbial expression, designating great and overwhelming troubles. — Ed.

thee, that even when thou hast yielded to their fury they were not pacified.'' For to cry after one is all evidence of settled hatred; for when an enemy stands his ground and offers resistance, it is no wonder that we assail him; but when he turns his back and allows that he is conquered, and declines fighting, it seems that we are burning with a furious hatred, when we follow him and draw him to figlit against his will, even when he of his own accord avoids a contest. It was to set forth this blind fury that God said that they cried after Jeremiah. [318]

He adds the word {מלא}, mela, which some render ``with a full voice;'' others, ``in a troop,'' or, ``in a mass.'' Either sense may be admitted; I will not therefore dwell on the point; for it makes but little difference whether we say that they followed the Prophet with loud clamor, or that they in a troop conspired against him.

He afterwards subjoins, Even though they speak to thee good things, that is, though they pretend to be friends and profess peace, yet trust them not God intimates by these words, that though the citizens of Anathoth did not openly rage against Jeremiah, they were yet full of perfidy: in short, he means that they were either wolves or foxes, for they fought against the Prophet, now by fraud, then openly. We hence see that God here condemns the people, and shews his approbation of what had been previously said by Jeremiah. He afterwards subjoins ---

Jeremiah 12:7

7. I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.

7. Reliqui domurn meam, deserui haereditatem meam, posui dilectionem (aut, desiderium) animae meae in manum inimicorum ejus.

He confirms what I have already stated; he testifies that the people were either openly furious or acting perfidiously and deceitfully; nor has it been the object hitherto merely to say that wrong had been done to the Prophet, but regard has been had to what he taught.

He now adds, Forsaken have I my house and left my heritage God here declares that it was all over with the people. They were inebriated with vain confidence, relying on the covenant which God had made. with their fathers, and thought that God was bound to them. Thus they wished to treat God with contempt according to their own humor, and at the same time to allow themselves every kind of licentiousness. The Prophet makes here many concessions, as though he had said, ``Ye are the house of God; ye are his heritage, ye are his beloved, ye are his portion and his richest portion; but all this will not prevent him to become your Judge, and at length to treat you with rigorous justice, and to vindicate himself.'' We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet. But as I have before said, the words have more weight having been spoken by God, than if Jeremiah himself had said them. God then, as though sitting for judgment, declares thus to the Jews, Forsaken have I my house The Temple was indeed commended in high terms; but the whole country also was

[318] It is necessary to understand {אחרי} here as meaning ``behind,'' that is, ``behind his back,'' as we commonly say; for his friends and relations acted perfidiously, they cried against him in his absence, while they spoke friendly to himself. The verse is as follows, --- For even thy brethren and thy father's house, Even they have dissembled with thee; Yea, they have cried behind thee vehemently Believe them not when they speak to thee kind things. ``Vehemently,'' or more literally, ``fully;'' {מלא} is used here adverbially. The versions, except the Vulgate, which renders it, ``with a full voice,'' have not given its meaning, nor the Targum. The ``multitude'' of our version is evidently wrong, distantly derived from the Septuagint. --- Ed.

on account of the Temple regarded as the habitation of God; for Judah was overshadowed by the Temple, and was secure and safe under its shadow. This word then is to be extended to the whole land and people, when God says, ``Forsaken have I nay house;'' that is, ``Though I have hitherto chosen for myself an habitation among the Jews, yet I now leave them.'' He then adds, Left have I my heritage (The verbs {עזב} oseb, and {נטש} nuthesh, have nearly the same meaning; the one is to forsake, and the other is to leave) This distinction was a great honor to the Jews; and hence, how much soever they kindled God's wrath against themselves, they yet, thought that they were safe as it were by privilege, inasmuch as they were the heritage of God. The Prophet. concedes to them this distinction, but shews how vain it was, for God had departed from them.

He then says, Given have I the desire or the love of my soul, [319] etc. The word {ידידות}, ididut, may be rendered love; but in Latin we may render it darling, (delitias:) the darling then of my soul have I put in the land of her enemies; for the pronoun is in the feminine gender. We hence see what is the subject here; for God intended to deprive the Jews of their vain confidence, and thus to humble and subdue them, so that they might know that no empty and vain titles would be of any help to them. These titles or distinctions he indeed concedes to them, but not without some degree of irony; for he at the same time shews that all this in which they gloried would avail them nothing when God executed on them his vengeance. But further, this passage contains an implied reproof to the Jews for their ingratitude, inasmuch as they were not retained in their obedience to God by benefits so remarkable; for how great was the honor of being called the heritage and the house of God, and even the beloved of his soul? They had deserved no such honor. As then God had manifested towards them such incomparable love, as he had rendered himself more than a father to them, was it not a wickedness in every way inexcusable, not to respond to so great a love, and that gratuitous, and also to so great a liberality? for what more could God have done than to call thenl the darling of his soul?

We hence see that the sin of the people is greatly amplified by these distinctions, on account of which they yet fostered their pride; as though he had said, ``These words indeed are ready on your tongues, --- that ye are God's heritage, and sanctuary, and his love; but ye are for this very reason the more abominable, because ye respond not to God's love and bountiful dealings: He has favored you with incredible love, he has raised you to very great honor, and yet ye despise him and perversely resist his teaching, nor can ye bear him to govern you.'' We now then see what instruction may be gathered from these words. It follows ---

Jeremiah 12:8

8. Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it.

8. Fuit mihi haereditas mea quasi leo in sylva; edidit contra me vocem suam;

[319] "My beloved soul" is the version of the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Arabic, but very improperly; the Syriac is "the beloved of my soul." The three first versions betoken an ignorance of the construction of the Hebrew language. To express their idea, "beloved" must have followed "soul," and not preceded it. Besides, the word for "beloved" is in the plural number, but used as delitice in Latin, to express great affection; and it ought to be rendered, the very dear, or the very beloved, of my soul. — Ed.

propterea odio ipsam habui.

God now shews the reason why he resolved to cast away the people; for it might appear at the first view very inconsistent, that God's covenant, which he had made with Abraham and his seed, should become void. Hence he shews here that he was not too rigid in heavily punishing the Jews, and that he could not be accused of levity or inconstancy in rejecting or repudiating them.

Mine heritage, he says, has become like a lion in the forest; that is, they have not only acted insolently towards me, but they have even dared furiously to attack me, like a lion who roars against men in the forest. God then here complains of their contempt, and then he declares how furious was their impiety: for the Jews, as though seized by the rage of a wild beast, dared to make a violent attack on him. And the words, as they are connected, render the sin the more atrocious, My heritage, he says, has become to me as a lion in the forest: one's heritage and patrimony, we know, is his delight; and then, they who possess small tenements live much more quietly than those who occupy large ones. God now shews that he was in his own heritage as though he was in a vast and wild forest, and also, that the fields which ought to have been his delight, and also his vineyards and meadows, were become places of the greatest horror, as though a lion were roaring and raging against unhappy men.

He says further, that it had sent forth its voice By these words he accuses the people of extreme wantonness; and such is to be found in the world at this day; for how audaciously do the Papists vomit forth their blasphemies against God? The unprincipled and the dregs of society hesitate not with a full mouth to be insolent towards God; and courtiers also and epicures, and those who admire themselves for their splendor and wealth, with what haughtiness do they rise up against; him; and how disdainfully do they reject every truth that is set before them! We therefore in this miserable age experience the very same thing which the Prophet deplores in the men of his own time, --- that they raised their voices against God himself.

He therefore comes to this conclusion, --- that he hated his own heritage. ``Since then,'' he says, ``the Jews are become to me as lions in a forest, since they have rendered themselves a horror instead of a delight to me, what am I to do with them? Can I treat them as my patrimony and heritage? But they have put me to flight by their treachery, yea, by their diabolical fury. It is therefore nothing strange that I hate them, though they have been my heritage.'' Thus the Prophet shews, that it availed the Jews nothing that they had been of old adopted, since they had repudiated themselves and had become alienated from God their Father.

Let us also hence learn, that whatever honor hypocrites at this day possess in the Church, they yet boast in vain; for though they may for a time be counted as the heritage of God, they are at the same time hated by God, inasmuch as they are within full of wickedness and of perverseness towards him; and then, when urged and pressed, they hesitate not to vomit forth their insolence. It follows: ---

Jeremiah 12:9

9. Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her; come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour.

9. An avis picta (vel, tineta, aut, colorata) hrereditas mea mihi? an avis in circuitu super earn? Venite, colligite vos (alii transitive acdipiunt, congregate omnes bestias, sed subaudiendum est, congregate vos) omnes bestiae agri (hoc est, onmes bestiae agrestes) venite ad devorandum ipsam.

The beginning of this verse is variously explained, Some think that a kind of bird is here meant, which has various colors, one variegated, which excites all other birds against itself; but this is without meaning. Others are of the opinion, and the greater part too, that birds tinged with blood were against his heritage. They hence thus explain the words, ``Is a bird, tinged,'' that is; with blood, ``my heritage,'' that is, about my heritage; ``is there a bird around it? They consider both clauses to be of the same meaning; and hence they think that the same thing is repeated in different words, that birds were flying against the Jews, like those which are drawn by the smell of carcases, and which come in great numbers, that each may have a part; and then, wild beasts follow them. But I approve of neither of these explanations; nor indeed have they even the appearance of being correct.

I therefore think that the people are now compared to foreign birds, as they were before to lions; as though he had said, --- ``I had chosen this people for myself, that they might be my friends, as birds which are wont to be gathered into their own cages, as sheep into their own folds, and as oxen, and other animals which are tamed, keep within their own enclosures. So when I gathered this people, I thought that they would be to me like domesticated sheep; but now they are like speckled birds; that is, like wild birds, or birds of the wood.'' For I have no doubt but that by a speckled or colored bird is to be understood a strange bird, which by its novel appearance excites the attention of men. Is then a variegated bird, or a bird of the wood, become mine heritage? Questions, we know, were often used by the Hebrews; and the Prophet here simply affirms the fact; and as God had said before, that his heritage was become like a lion in the forest, so he adds now, that his heritage was like a speckled bird. A question has much more power and force than a simple declaration; for God assumes here the character of one in astonishment, --- ``What does this mean, that my heritage should become to me like some bird from the wood, or a foreign bird?'' He then adds, All birds then shall be around and all beasts of the field [320]

We now see how fitly the words of the Prophet run; God had complained that his heritage was like a lion in the forest, and also like a wild and foreign bird; and now he says, Then all birds will fly to the prey and all the beasts of the field; as though he had said, --- ``Since they have dared to act thus wantonly, and have dared to assail my servants like wild beasts, and have also become wild birds which cannot be tamed, I will shew what they will gain by their ferocity; for I will now send for all the birds of

[320] The most literal rendering of the verse is as follows, — 9. Is not my heritage to me a stripped bird of prey? Is there not a bird of prey around against it? Come, assemble, every beast of the field; Hasten ye to devour. The versions and the Targum all differ, and are wholly unsatisfactory. Some, as Venema, agreeably with our version, retain not the questionary form in the two first lines, and render them thus, — A stripped bird of prey is my heritage to me; A bird of prey is around against it. The meaning is the same; but the {{ח before ``bird of prey,'' or rapacious bird, seems to favor the interrogation. The ,{צבוע} stripped or speckled, is a participle, and not the name of a ravenous bird,'' as Blayney thinks, is evident from its location, for it follows the word ,{עיט} a rapacious bird: it would have otherwise preceded it. The Vulgate renders it ``discolored --- diversely colored,'' and the Syriac is the same. --- Ed

the air, and the wild beasts of the wood:, that they may fly together quickly, and that they may come together to the prey.'' That we must thus understand the Prophet's meaning, we learn from the very words; for God not only says, ``A speckled bird has mine heritage become,'' but he adds, to me, as he had before said, that his heritage had become to him as a lion, so he says now, Is not mine heritage become to me? etc This pronoun then ought to be carefully noticed; for we hence learn, as I have said already, that the intractable disposition of the people is here condemned, for they could by no means be tamed.

But the latter clause ought also to be especially observed; for it imports as much as though God had said, ``As then your wickedness is such that ye are to me lions and wild birds, take your course; but I will yet check this your barbarous and untameable ferocity; for I have under my command all the birds of the air and all the wild beasts of the field; let them then come together to this one bird, and to this one beast. Ye are but one bird; ye are indeed terrible at the first view, for ye are worse than all the hawks; but ye are only one bird, and around you shall come all birds, which shall make war on you. Ye are as one lion in a forest, or one boar, or one wolf; but all the savage beasts of the wood shall come together against you, and shall come together to devour you.''

This place deserves special notice; for we hence learn how foolishly men deceive themselves when they oppose God and perversely shake off his yoke, and suffer not, themselves to be corrected by his word; they are lions, they are savage birds; but the Lord can easily destroy them, for all birds and all wild beasts are ready to obey him; and hence it follows: ---

Jeremiah 12:10

10. Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.

10. Pastores nmlti perdiderunt vitem mean.a, calcarunt (aut, vastarunt, utrunque enim significat {בסוס}, sed hic verbum quadratum, perdiderunt ergo) portionem mearn, dederunt portionem desiderii mei in desertum vastitatis.

He explains by another comparison what we have just observed; he calls those pastors or shepherds whom he had before compared to wild beasts; for by saying, ``Come ye, all the wild beasts of the wood,'' he doubtless meant the same as those of whom he now speaks; and yet he calls them pastors. But he touched the Jews to the quick, for they could not bear him to discharge the office of a pastor towards them. God ought to have been the pastor of his chosen people; but they were wild beasts. ``Forsaken them have I,'' he says, ``for they were wholly unworthy. What now then? Other pastors shall come, but those of a very different character, being fiercer and more cruel than wolves or any savage wild beasts.'' Though then the Prophet blends various comparisons, we yet see that he handles the same subject; we also see why he thus changes his expressions, for there is a meaning in every word he uses. It is indeed certain that those also are called pastors who would come as leaders or chiefs from Assyria and Chaldea; but there is no doubt here an implied antithesis, such as I have referred to, as though he had said, ``I have hitherto been a shepherd to you, and was wining to continue to be so perpetually; but as ye can

no longer bear me, other shepherds shall come, who will treat you according to their own will and disposition.''

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast not only been pleased to offer thyself to be our Shepherd, but hast also set over us thine only --- begotten Son, that he might gather us into his own fold, and as he sweetly invites us daily by his voice to continue collected under his power and government, --- O grant that we may suffer ourselves to be governed by him, and never be like wild and untameable beasts, but so obey his voice, that wherever he may call us we may be ready to follow, and thus proceed through the whole course of our life, until we shall at length reach the goal which is set before us, and be thence led to the fruition of that eternal inheritance and glory which thine only --- begotten Son has obtained for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Fiftieth

We began yesterday to explain what the Prophet declared that the Jews would be laid waste by shepherds; and we said, that there is implied in this expression what is ironical; for they caught to have allowed themselves to be governed by God, who was wining to discharge towards them the office of a shepherd; but as they had refused to receive such a favor, they had deserved to be given over by God to the Assyrians and Chaldeans, who are also called shepherds. As, however, there is mention made of vineyard, the Prophet alludes to the shepherds of sheep or cattle: for when any one brings his herd or his flock to a vineyard it is no small evil. Hence also this allusion is not unsuitable. However this may be, the Prophet intimates, that as they would not bear the yoke of God, such shepherds would come as they deserved.

He again repeats what we have before observed, that this people had not only been God's vineyard, {כרם} carem, but also his portion or his heritage, and even a portion of desire: for God designed that it. should be often testified, that no bounty towards the Jews had been omitted by him, in order that their ingratitude might appear less excusable. As then God had manifested so much love towards them as to call them the desire of his soul and a desirable heritage, what wickedness it was not to acknowledge such an incomparable kindness? It now follows ---

Jeremiah 12:11

11. They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourneth unto me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart.

11. Posuit vastitatem, luxit super me (vel, ad me) vastata (vel, vastatio, quidam adjective accipiunt, quidam volunt esse nomen substantivum, sed proprie {שממה} secundum grammaticam est vastatio, sed appositive loco participii capitur, quemadmodum continuo post subjicit,) vastata est omnis terra; quia (vel, tametsi) nemo posuit super cor (hoc est, nemo animum adjecit, quemadmodum alibi vidimus.)

There is a change of number in the verb {שם} shem; but there is no obscurity: for the Prophet means, that the Jews would be exposed to the outrage of all, so that every one would plunder and lay waste the land. He does not then speak only of all their enemies or of the whole army; but he also declares that every one would be their master, so as to vex, scatter, devour, and wholly to destroy them at his pleasure: in short, he sets forth the atrocity of their punishment, --- that the whole

land would not only be spoiled by the united army, but also by every individual in it. [321]

He then adds that the land was in mourning before him. The Prophet seems to me to touch here the torpor of his own nation, because there was no one who had any regard for God; nay, they laughed at the judgments which were nigh at hand, and of which he had often spoken. Hence God says, that they would at length come to him when calamities oppressed them and caused them to mourn. ``As then in peaceable times,'' he says, ``they are unwining to come to me, but are so refractory and untameable, that I can effect nothing by so many warnings, they shall come,'' he says, ``but in another state of mind, even in extreme mourning.''

He afterwards adds, No one lays on the heart What this means we have elsewhere explained. But the particle {כי}, ki, which is properly a causative, may be here rendered as an adversative. If we take it in its first and most proper sense, then a reason is here given why the Jews would be brought to a most grievous mourning, even because they had despised all the prophets, and wholly disregarded as a fable what they had so often heard from God's mouth: and this is the view taken by most interpreters. But it may be also taken as an adversative, as in many other places, --- ``Though no one lays on the heart;'' and thus it will be a complaint as to their perverse stupor, inasmuch as, when smitten by God's hand, they did not perceive that they were punished for their sins, not that they were wholly insensible as to their evils. But what avails it to cry and to howl, as God's Spirit speaks elsewhere, except, the hand of the smiter be perceived? The Jews then ought, had a spark of wisdom been in them, to have considered their sins, to have prayed for forgiveness, and to have repented, and also to have embraced the favor promised to them. But when they perversely added sins to sins, God justly expostulated with them, because they did not attend to the signs of his wrath, by which they ought not only to have been taught, but also subdued. It follows ---

Jeremiah 12:12

12. The spoilers are come upon all high places through the wilderness: for the sword of the LORD shall devour from the one end of the land even to the other end of the land: no flesh shall have peace.

12. Super omnes oras (vel, quomodo alii vertunt, super omnia loca excelsa, {שפים}, uno verbo dicere licebit, prominentias; accipitur etiam pro rupibus; sed loquitur de finibus extremis; ergo super fines extremos) in desertum venerunt perditores; quid gladius Jehovae voravit a fine terrae usque ad finem terrae; non est pax universae carni.

Jeremiah here proceeds farther --- that no corner of the land would be exempt from the attacks of enemies. Desert is not put here for solitude not inhabited, but for high places; and as such places fbr the most part are fit for pastures, there is

[321] The Septuagint and Arabic render the verb as passive in the singular number, "It has been set a desolation." We may take {{שמה as a passive participle, the {ו} being omitted, with ,{ה} it, affixed. Then the verse would run thus, --- 11. Set it is an utter desolation; It has mourned before me (or, to me) being utterly desolate: Desolate has been the whole land, Though no man lays it to heart. ``Utter desolation'' is the meaning, for it is a reduplicate noun. Both the Vulgate and the Targum connect ``being utterly desolate'' with the next line, though not rightly: but both, as well as the Syriac, render the first verb, as though it were {שמוה} ``They have set it.'' Venema and Houbigant render ,{עלי} in the second line, a preposition, and render the line thus, --- It has mourned on account of desolation. --- Ed.

no doubt but that he means here secluded places. It is, however, sufficient for our present purpose to consider, that the desert; here is put in opposition to the level parts of the country. When, therefore, the enemies had rambled through the plains, the Prophet says, that no recesses, however hidden, would be safe; for there also the violence of the enemies would penetrate. And this is what he states more clearly at the end of the verse when he says that there would be no peace to any flesh: for he intimates, no doubt, that all, from the least to the greatest, would be rendered miserablei as God's vengeance would reach every one without exception; and he says this, because those who sought hiding --- places might have hoped to escape, thinking that the enemy would be satisfied with a limited victory; but the Prophet declares, that God's wrath would so burn as to consume all, and to leave no part of the land without involving in ruin the rich and the poor, the country people and the citizens.

After having then threatened the plains, which were more open and accessible, he now adds, that neither the mountains nor the hins would escape the outrage of their enemies; and at the same time he reminds them that God would be the author of all their calamities; for had he only spoken of the Chaldeans, the Jews would not have thought that they were given up to punishment by God on account of their sins: it would have therefore been without any good effect had they thought that they had a contest only with the Chaldeans. Hence he calls their attention to God's judgment, and shews, that though ambition, avarice, and cruelty instigated and influenced their enemies, they were yet conducted by a divine power, because the Jews had for a long time provoked against themselves the vengeance of God. He, in short, intimates that the Chaldeans would fight for God and do his work, as he would be the chief commander in the war; and this he intimates lest the Jews should think that such great calamities happened to them by chance: hence he says, The sword of Jehovah hath devoured, etc. He indeed speaks of future things; but he uses the past tense, which is commonly done by the prophets. [322] It now follows ---

Jeremiah 12:13

13. They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns: they have put themselves to pain, but shall not profit: and they shall be ashamed of your revenues because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

13. Seminarunt triticum et spinas messuerunt; haereditatem adepti sunt (vel, fatigati sunt) nec profecerunt; et confusi sunt a proventibus vestris, a furore (vel, excandescentia, potius) irae Jehovae.

Most interpreters understand this of the prophets, that they had been disappointed, after having faithfully cultivated the field of God and sown good seed, that thorns only had sprung up, and briars only had grown: but this is a strained exposition. The Prophet, I doubt not, sets forth the curse of God, which the people were soon to experience. I indeed readily admit, that when he speaks of sowing and reap-

[322] The versions and the Targum render the first verb in the past tense, but the second, incorrectly, in the future. The verse is as follows, — 12. On all heights in the wilderness have wasters come, For the sword has for Jehovah devoured; From one end of the land to the other end of the land No peace has been to any flesh. The third line reads better with the last. No doubt, the past, as Calvin says, is used for the future. The same is the case in the next verse. — Ed.

ing, the expression is metaphorical; but I have no doubt but that the Jews are said to sow in seeking aids here and there, in strengthening themselves by confederacies, and in devising means to repel dangers.

Hence he says, by way of concession, that they had sown wheat; for they had recourse to false counsels: but he speaks according to what they themselves thought; for they imagined that they were safe when they found that the Egyptians were ready to help them; and when they procured assistance from various quarters, they considered that they were acting wisely, and. thus they flattered themselves with a prosperous issue. The Prophet now laughs to scorn this vain confidence: but yet in words he allows that they were going on successfully: as a husbandman, while sowing, expects that he will have a good harvest, so also the Jews thought that they would have good fruit after having thus sown. But the Prophet says that they would be disappointed; for instead of wheat briars and thorns would grow, so that the issue would not answer their expectations. Thus the words of the Prophet would well harmonize: but to explain the passage of the prophets would by no means be suitable, as it will hereafter appear more clearly.

He then says that they had sown wheat (he uses the plural number) and reaped thorns He intimates that they hoped for a good harvest, for they sowed wheat, as they thought; that is, they wisely, or rather astutely, provided for themselves, as they left undone nothing that was necessary for their safety; but they reaped, or shall reap thorns; for he speaks of what was future. He means that God would frustrate their expectation; for their sowing, from which they promised themselves so much, would prove fruitless.

He then adds, that they had obtained an inheritance, or had endured grief, but were not enriched Some render the first clause a little more harshly, that ``they were riJeremiah'' But I readily excuse its harshness, if it suits the place: then the meaning would be, --- that they tormented themselves with continual labors, and thus became rich; for we know that they who are extremely anxious about anything wear out themselves, and become in a manner their own executioners; and this would not be unsuitable to this place. However, a different view may be taken, --- that the Prophet uses the expression, that they had obtained an heritage, not in its ordinary sense, as signifying, not that God gave them the land of Canaan as their hereditary possession, or that they had accumulated wealth, but that they had thus increased in their own esteem, because they had the Egyptians as their friends, and looked for help to the neighboring nations, and because they thought that they could by various stratagems prevent the Chaldeans from coming nigh them. Their heritage then was, that they were able to collect from various quarters such assistance as would render them safe, and repel all dangers. God then allows that they had obtained an heritage; but what then, he says? All this will not avail them, nor shall they be thereby enriched. He, in short, intimates that they would be thus deceived by trusting in helps so laboriously and sedulously acquired; for the aids in which they proudly trusted would vanish away, as well as all their counsels and designs; in a word, the vain attempts by which they thought to secure everything for themselves are laughed to scorn.

He adds, for the same purpose, that they were confounded on account of their produce They who understand this of the prophets read thus, ``they were ashamed,'' that is, ``of their own labors;'' but this is wholly foreign to the subject. He then continues in the same strain, --- that the Jews were ashamed when they found the issue contrary to what they expected. He mentions ``produce:'' the noun conms from {בא} ba, which means to come or to enter; it has also other meanings. But the Hebrews call it produce, because it comes every year. He says then, that they were ashamed of their produce, because they received no fruit such as they expected. Thus Jeremiah carries on the same metaphor: they had sown, but thorns were found instead of wheat; they also obtained for themselves an heritage, or they wearied themselves with labor, but it was useless: they further promised to themselves a great and rich produce, but it came to nothing. We now then understand the meaning of the words.

But we must at the same time consider what the Prophet had in view. Doubtless he intended to shake off from the Jews that arrogance by which they blinded themselves, as though he had said, --- ``I see that I effect but little; for the Egyptians, who are to come to your aid, are as yet strong; ye think that they are prepared to oppose the Assyrians and Chaldeans, and ye have also other confederacies As then ye are thus well fortified, ye consider yourselves to be cut of the reach of danger; but the Lord will make you ashamed of this your presumption, for all your produce or provision will come to nothing.'' The produce, we know, was the successful issue with which they flattered themselves, so that they thought that nothing would do them harm. This then is the meaning of the Prophet. [323]

He adds, Through the burning of the wrath of Jehovah They could not have been otherwise awakened, except they were made to think that God was angry with them. The Prophet then says, though the whole world might laugh him to scorn, that nothing would avail them, inasmuch as God fought against them. We must at the same time notice the change of person, They have been ashamed of your produce Some have on this account applied the verb, {בשו}, beshu, ``they have been ashamed,'' to the prophets; but it is an anomaly often found, and it is in this place very emphatical. Had he said, in the third person, ``They were ashamed of their fruits,'' it would have been less calculated to rouse their minds; but having previously spoken in disdain of the Jews, as he knew them to be deaf, he now, as he proceeds, turns his discourse to them, and says that they were ashamed; yes, he says, *``Ye* were ashamed of your fruits.'' It is therefore a kind of modification; but it is only used that the Prophet

[323] The Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Arabic, render all the verbs in the second person plural, and in the present tense, "Ye sow," etc.; but the Vulgate and Targum retain the Hebrew third person and the past tense, except in the third line, "Ye (not they) are ashamed," etc., which seems to be the correct reading, though not found in any MS., for it is what "your fruits," or produce, require. The meaning of being "wearied," or sick with labor, is given only by the Syriac to the verb {;{נחלו all the other versions, as well as the Targum, give it the idea of ``inheriting,'' or possessing as an heritage. So Blayney renders it, ``They have possessed,'' etc. The verse then is as follows, --- 13. They have sown wheats, but thorns have they reaped; They have got an heritage, but have not succeeded: Yea, ashamed have you been of your produce, Through the burnlung of the wrath of Jehovah. A conversive vau before ``succeeded'' is supplied by many MSS., and by the Vulgate and Syriac. The way in which Calvin accounts for the change of person in the third line is ingenious; but an instance of what he says can hardly be found in one and the same clause. All the versions and the Targum regard the verb as ,{ותבשו} the tau only being supplied. Venema takes the verb to be an imperative in the second person plural, and gives this version, --- Therefore be ye ashamed of your fruits, By reason of the heat of the wrath of Jehovah. But what the early versions warrant is more consistent with the context, and gives a better meaning. --- Ed.

might more sharply touch their feelings; for they had need of this kind of speaking, as a plain discourse would have produced no effect. It follows ---

Jeremiah 12:14

14. Thus saith the LORD against all mine evil neighbours, that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them.

14. Sic dicit Jehova, Super omnes vicinos meos malos qui tangunt haereditatem meam, quam haereditare obtinui, populum meum Israel; ecce ego evellam ipsos e terra ipsorum, et demum Jehudah evellam e medio ipsorum.

The Prophet now begins to mitigate what might have beyond measure exasperated the minds of the people; and this he did, not so much for the sake of the people in general, as for the sake of the elect, a few of whom still remained. We have indeed seen that it was all over with the body of the people; for it had been said to Jeremiah,

``Pray not for them, for I will not hear them,''
(Jeremiah 11:14)

The Prophet then knew the immutable purpose of God as to the mass of the people. Nor did he intend here to soften what might have appeared grievous in what he had taught. But as we have said elsewhere, and indeed often repeated, the prophets used reproofs only as to the whole community, and then spoke as it were apart to the elect; for there ever was a remnant among that people, inasmuch as God never suffered his covenant to be made void. As then the Church was still existing, the Prophet had regard to the hidden seed, and therefore blended consolation with those grievous and dreadful predictions which we have noticed.

This is the reason why he now says that God would be the avenger of that cruelty which their neighbors had exercised towards the Jews. For this temptation might have greatly disturbed the minds of the godly, --- ``What means this, that God rages so violently against us, while he spares the heathens? Have the Moabites, or the Ammonites, or the Idumeans, deserved nothing? Why then does God bear with them, while he deals so severely with us?'' The Prophet then meets this objection, and says, that punishment was nigh those nations, and such as they deserved, and that for the sake of the chosen people. If indeed he had only said that the Moabites and the Idumeans, and the rest, would be summoned before God's tribunal, that they in their turn might be punished, it would have given no relief to the miserable Jews; for it would have been a very empty consolation to have only so many associates in their misery: but the Prophet also adds, that God would be thus propitious to his elect; for it was a sign of his paternal favor, when he inflicted punishment on all those neighhors by whom they had been so cruelly treated.

He begins by saying, Thus saith Jehovah; and he says, against all my evil neighbors, etc. He speaks here in the person of God, who calls the Moabites and the Idumeans, as well as others, his neighbors, because he had chosen the land of Canaan as an habitation for himself; for it was, as it appears often from the prophets, an evidence above all other things of God's favor, that he dwelt among that people. He was not indeed confined either to the Temple or to the land of Canaan; but he had taken the people under his safeguard and protection, as though he had his hands

extended for the purpose of defending them all. We now see why he calls the nations near to the Jews his evil neighbors: for though the Jews deserved extreme evils, yet that promise remained valid,

``He who touches you, touches the apple of my eye.'' (Zechariah 2:8)

Then he adds, who touch my heritage Here he speaks not ironically as before, but regards simply his own election, as though he had said, --- ``Whatever the Jews may be, I will yet be consistent with myself, and my covenant shall not fall to the ground; for my faithfulness shall surpass their perfidy.'' We must yet bear in mind what I have already stated, --- that the whole of this is to be confined to the elect, who were few in number and were hid like twenty or a hundred grains in a large heap of chaff As then the Prophet addresses here especially the elect of God, it is no wonder that he calls them God's heritage, not for the sake of upbraiding them., as he had done before, but because God really loved them and would have them to be saved. There is another thing to be noticed, --- that God had in view the Idumeans as well as the Ammonites, Sidonians, and Tyrians, who had unjustly oppressed his people. The Ammonites and the Moabites were by kindred connected, for they both derived their origin from Lot, the nephew of Abraham. As to the Idumeans, they were the descendants of Esau, all of the same family; and they knew that the Jews had been chosen by God. Hence God here shews that he himself was injured, when such wrongs were done to his people.

We hence see why God calls here Israel his heritage; which, he says, by heritage I have possessed Here he takes away from the neighboring nations every handle for evasion; as though he had said, --- ``Though the Jews have sinned, yet these are not their judges; nor have they any right to punish them for their unfaithfulness: it has been my will to choose them for mine heritage.'' We thus see that these words are emphatical, their import being, that God would punish the wrongs done to his people, because his own majesty was insulted, inasmuch as no regard was shewn to his adoption: nor had the heathells any right to inquire whether the Jews were worthy or not; for it had pleased God to take them under his protection. [324]

He then adds, Behold, I will pluck them up from their land, and the house of Judah will I pluck up from the midst of them He mentions here two kinds of plucking up. He says first, that he would by force expel the Idumeans and drive them far into exile; for this is the meaning, when he says, I will pluck them up, as {נתש} nutash, is to draw out by force. The word is often found in the prophets, especially in reference to the Church,

``I have planted and will pluck up,'' (Jeremiah 45:4:)

We have also seen the following,

``I have set thee to plant and to pluck up,'' (Jeremiah 1:10)

this was to shew the power of prophetic truth. And he says here, ``I will pluck up,''

[324] No doubt the people of Israel were often called the heritage of God; but the word heritage means here evidently the land. The version of Calvin cannot be admitted; the verb is in Hiphil and must be rendered, "I have caused to inherit;" and so it is rendered in all the versions and Targum. The verse runs thus, — 14. Thus saith Jehovah, — As to all my neighbors, Who have done evil, who have touched the heritage, Which I have caused my people Israel to inherit, — Behold, I will root them up from their land, And the house of Judah will I root up from the midst of them. There is here a promise of two removals, — that of heathens from the Iand of Canaan, — and that of the Jews from the land of heathens. — Ed.

or eradicate them, as some render it; but as this word (eradicabo) is not Latin, let us retain evellam --- I will pluck up; only you must understand that what it properly means is, to draw up by the roots, and that by force: I will pluck up, he says, the Idumeans, the Ammonites, the Moabites, and all other neighboring nations, from their land, because they have violated mine heritage, even the people chosen by me: therefore they themselves shall be driven into remote exile and into captivity, according to what is said elsewhere,

``Remember the children of Edom, who said in the day of Jerusalem,'' etc., (Psalm 137:7)

and we shall hereafter see that this was fulfined; for the Prophet will presently speak of all these nations, in order that the Jews might perceive that God's judgment would extend to all parts of the earth. But here the Prophet briefly threatens these nations with vengeance, that he might alleviate the sorrow of the small portion which remained. For as we have said, the body of the people was without hope, as God had given them up, according to what they deserved, to final destruction.

But as God ever reserved a remnant, the Prophet says in this place, The house of Judah will I pluck up from the midst of them: for some had fled to the Moabites and to others, and some had indeed been taken captives and were held in bondage. The Jews, as we know, had been miserably plundered, and some of them had been exposed to sale by these nations. Hence God here promises that he would be at length entreated by his people, so as to gather the remnant from the Moabites as well as from the Idumeans and other heathen nations. This second plucking up is therefore to be taken in a good sense; for the Prophet promises deliverance here to God's elect: and yet he suitably employs the same word, in order to set forth the cruelty of these nations, who would have never winingly given them up, had not God by force rescued from their tyranny the innocent Israelites --- that is, innocent with regard to them. ``I will,'' he says, ``draw them out by force;'' as though he had said, --- ``However obstinate may be the cruelty of all these nations, by whom my people shall be taken captive, I will yet be stronger than they, so that I shall bring forth the captives, though they who consider them as perpetual slaves may resist with all their power.''

And this also have we found in our time; for how hard was our bondage under the Papacy? and was not also its tyranny almost unconquerable? But God put forth his power and drew forth a few from under its cruel domination. In the same manner he promised formerly to the remnant of his people, that he would be so merciful to them as to rescue them from the yoke of tyranny. It follows ---

Jeremiah 12:15

15. And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land.

15. Et erit postquam extraxero illos, revertar et miserebor ipsorum, et redire ipsos faciam (vel, reducam) unumquenque ad haereditem suam, et unumquenque ad terram suam.

God does not only promise mercy here to the Jews, but also to heathen nations,

of whom he would be the Judge, to punish them for the sake of his people. And that this passage is to be extended to aliens is evident from the context; for the Prophet immediately adds, ``And it shall be, that when they shall learn the ways of my people, to swear in my name, Live does Jehovah, as they have taught my people to swear by Baal, then shall they be built in the midst of my people.'' We hence see that God would not only shew mercy to the remnant of his elect people, but also to their enemies.

If it be objected, --- that thus God's favor, manifested towards the children of Abraham, was obscured, the answer is, --- that this availed much to confirm the hope of the faithful; for they had not only to look for their own salvation, but also for that of their enemies, whom God would gather together with them. Thus God rendered double his favor to the Israelites. The Prophet also in this place confirms in a striking manner the confidence of the faithful; for he says that God would be merciful even to their enemies for their sake, as they would be saved in common with themselves. We now then understand the object of the Prophet, when he declares, that God, after having drawn out the Gentiles from their own countries, would again be merciful to them, so as to restore every one of them to their own inheritance and to their own place.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as at this day such a dreadful scattering terrifies us on every side, we may learn to raise up our eyes above the world and to hope for that which is now hidden from us, even that in executing thy judgments on the Church as well as on aliens, thou wilt be so merciful to the whole world, as that we may be gathered into the unity of faith: and may we labor to devote ourselves wholly to thy service and cultivate brotherly concord among ourselves: 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 Fifty-First

We said in our last Lecture that God here promises pardon and salvation to alien nations, provided they repented, and that he did this, that he might more fully confirm his promises to his elect people. We indeed know that all nations were then excluded from the covenant of God: as, then, he would extend his mercy even to them, the Jews might with some confidence entertain hope, since they were already as it were near to God, he having adopted them as his peculiar people and heritage.

And this is what may be easily gathered from the context; for God declares that he would draw forth his own elect from these nations; and then he adds, that he would proceed still further, that he would even receive into favor those who had been previously his enemies. Hence he says, After 1 shall draw them out, I will return, [325] and shew mercy to them. He speaks this of aliens: And I will restore them, he says, every one to his heritage and to his own land It now follows ---

Jeremiah 12:16

16. And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people,

[325] Rather, "I will turn," i.e., from the course he had pursued. This is often the meaning of {.{שוב It is rendered here adverbially by Blayney and others; though it may at times be so rendered, yet not suitably in this place. It means here a change in God's proceedings: he had plucked them up; but now he will deal differently with them. --- Ed

to swear by my name, The LORD liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people.

16. Et accidet, Si discendo didicerint vias populi mei ad jurandum per nomen meum, vivit Jehova, sicuti docuerunt populum meum jurare (ad verbum, ad jurandum) per Baal, tunc aedificabuntur in medio populi mei.

We see that this refers to the Gentiles, who were previously aliens to the grace of God; nay, they entertained the most dire hatred towards his chosen people. In short, God declares that he would be merciful and propitious to these miserable nations, of whose salvation no hope was entertained, for they had been rejected by him, and they had oftell and long, and in various ways, provoked his vengeance; and though he speaks of neighbors, as we have seen, yet this prediction belongs generally to the whole world, and was at length fulfined in the call of the Gentiles; for God then gathered a Church indiscriminately both from the Jews and the Gentiles.

But a condition is here laid down --- If the Gentiles, who had hitherto opposed the true worship of God, received his law. We indeed know how much hated was true religion, especially by the neighboring nations; for their hatred was increased, because they saw that their superstitions were condenmed by this one people. As then they had been greatly incensed against God and the pure doctrine of his law, he now requires a change in them; If they will learn, he says, the ways of my people By the ways of his people he understands what he had commanded. The people of Israel had indeed often departed from true religion; but God here refers to himself rather than to their perverse conduct, for the law had not been abolished by the wickedness and ingratitude of his people. We hence see that, by the ways of his people, we are not to understand those glosses which the Jews had devised, but the law itself, which God had delivered to them. The authority of men, therefore, cannot be hence established, as though they had power to frame a religion for themselves; but God means only that by his good pleasure alone the Jews had been taught what was right. In short, Jeremiah understands the ways of the people passively, not those which the people had contrived for themselves, but such as they had received from above.

It is then added, That they may swear in my name The expression is a part for the whole, for in it is included the whole worship and service of God. Swearing, as we have said elsewhere, is a part of God's worship and of true religion, for we profess that we ourselves and our life are in God's hand when we swear by his name; and we also refer judgment to him, and own that he is really God, inasmuch as he knows our hearts and judges of hidden things. All these things are included in swearing. It is therefore no wonder that, in this place and in many other places, the whole of religion is designated by this expression, according to what is said elsewhere,

``Swear shall they all in my name, Live do I, saith Jehovah; to me shall bend every knee, and by me shall every tongue swear.''
(Isaiah 45:23)

And as by the altar, in another place, is meant the worship of God, so here by swearing. The meaning is, --- that if the Gentiles became so changed as to submit their neck to the yoke of the law, and allow themselves to be ruled by God, they

would be made partakers of the mercy which the Jews had before enjoyed.

Then follows the common form of swearing, Live does Jehovah So the Scripture speaks everywhere; and by these words men do not merely testify that they swear by the life of God, but they also ascribe eternity to him, as though it was said, ``God alone exists:'' for no life is anywhere to be found but in God. Men, indeed, and brute animals, and even trees, are said to live; but in trees there is only vigor without the senses, in brutes the senses without reason and understanding; but in men the life is light; yet they live not by or of themselves, but they derive life from God, according to what we see on the earth, on which light shines; but we know that there is really no light where we dwell but what descends and is conveyed to us by the rays of the sun. In the same manner it may be said that life dwells in men, being conveyed to them by the hidden power of God. Nor do angels, properly speaking, live of themselves. We hence see the meaning of the words, Live does Jehovah The eternity of God is hereby set forth; he is also owned as the Judge of the world; and further, whatever he claims for himself, men thus testify that it is justly and by right his due.

It afterwards follows, As they taught my people to swear by Baal The corruptions of heathens had greatly prevailed among the chosen people; and the greater part, when they saw that the nations prospered, had cast aside every care for true worship and sincere religion. As then the Jews had been so much given to the superstitions of the heathens, the Prophet says, speaking in God's name, --- ``If the Gentiles, who have hitherto taught my people to swear by Baal, who have drawn them away to their own idolatries and fictitious and false forms of worship, begin now to swear by my name, faithfully to worship me alone, they shall be built in the midst of my people.'' The metaphor of building is very common; but in this place God intimates no more than that the Gentiles would become a part of his flock, when they cast away their superstitions, and embraced the pure worship prescribed in the law. Nor is this to be applied to any particular place, as some have frigidly explained it, but ``in the midst of the people,'' is the same as though he had said, --- ``I will count those nations my people, as a part of my Church,'' according to what is said in the Psalms, --- that though the Tyrians and Sidonians, and Egyptians, and others who had been hostile nations, were born here and there, yet they would boast that they were all born at Jerusalem when God owned them as members of his own people. (Psalm 138:3, 4) [326] It follows ---

Jeremiah 12:17

17. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the LORD.

17. Quod si non audierint, tunc evellam (copula etiam hic accipitur pro adverbio temporis) gentem illam, evellendo et perdendo, dicit Jehova.

As he had shewn that there was a sure hope of salvation to his own people, when

[326] The verb {למד,} to learn, in this verse, has evidently two meanings, as ``learn'' has in old English. In the first instance, --- ``If they will learn the ways of my people,'' it means what is commonly understood by the term; but, in the second instance, --- ``As they have learned my people,'' it signifies to teach Jeremiah Though in English the word is not now used in this sense, yet in Welsh the word still continues to have this double meaning; and the same word, ``dysgu,'' is used in these two clauses, according to what is done in Hebrew. There is here a clear instance of {ו} being rendered ``then,'' and it cannot be rendered othersise, --- ``If learning they will learn, etc., then shall they be built up,'' etc. In the first clause there is also a striking correspondence between the Welsh and the {אם,} --- ``Os gan ddysgu y dysgant.'' --- Ed

the Gentiles would embrace his mercy, so he now threatens the Gentiles with destruction in case they repented not; for he had promised to be merciful to the Gentiles conditionally, and said, --- ``If they learn the ways of my people, if they submit to my authority:'' but now he says, if they will not hear, etc We hence see that God here threatens extreme vengeance to the Gentiles if they subjected not themselves to his yoke, so as to render obedience to him. His object, no doubt, was to terrify the Jews as well as the nations; for as the Gentiles could not with impunity despise God, though unknown to them, how inexcusable would the Jews be, who had from their infancy imbibed the true knowledge of the law, if, after the manner of the Gentiles, they were perverse and intractable?

We in short see that God, on one side, sweetly allured the Jews to render a wining obedience to his law, and, on the other, he threatened them; for as he could by no means bear with the perverseness of the Gentiles, much less could the Jews hope to escape punishment. This is the import of the passage. Now follows another prophecy ---

Chapter 13

CHAPTER 13

Jeremiah 13:1-9

1. Thus saith the LORD unto me, Go and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, and put it not in water.

1. Sic dicit Jehova mihi, Vade et compara tibi cingulum lineum, et pone illud super renes tuos, et in aquas ne inferas illud.

2. So I got a girdle, according to the word of the LORD, and put it on my loins,

2. Et comparavi mihi cingulum (paravi, ad verbum) sicuti mandave-rat Jehova, et posui (vel, applicavi) illud ad renes meos.

3. And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying,

3. Et factus est sermo Jehovae ad me secundo, dicendo,

4. Take the girdle that thou hast got, which is upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock.

4. Tolle cingulum quod comparasti, quod est super renes tuos, et surge, proficiscere (vel, surgens proficiscere) ad Euphratem, et absconde illic in foramine petrae.

5. So I went, and hid it by Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me.

5. Et profectus sum et abscondi Euphrate, quemadmodum praeceperat Jehova mihi.

6. And it came to pass after many days, that the LORD said unto me, Arise, go to Euphrates, and take the girdle from thence, which I commanded thee to hide there.

6. Et accidit post finem (a fine ad verbum) dierum multorum, et dixit (hoc est, ut diceret) Jehova mihi, Surge et proficiscere ad Euphratem, et tolle illinc cingulum, de quo praecepi tibi ut absconderes illic.

7. Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid it: and, behold, the girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing.

7. Et profectus sum ad Euphratem, et fodi et sustuli cingulum e loco ubi illic absconderam; et ecce corruptum erat cingulum, non proderat ad omne (hoc est, ad

quicquam)

8. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

8. Et factus est sermo Jehovae ad me, dicendo,

9. Thus saith the LORD, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem.

9. Sic dicit Jehova, In hune modum corrumpam excellentiam Jehudah et excellentiam Jerusalem magnam (vel, altitudinem)

I have said that there is here a new prophecy; for the Prophet is said to buy for himself a girdle or a belt, or, according to some, a truss or breeches; and as mention is made of linen, this opinion may be probable; but {אזור}, asur, means not only the breeches which they then wore, but also a girdle or belt, according to what Isaiah says, when, speaking figuratively of Christ's kingdom, that faithfulness would be the girdle of his loins. (Isaiah 11:5) It, may here, however, be taken for breeches as well as for a girdle. [327]

As to the matter in hand, it makes no great difference. The Prophet then is bidden to buy for himself a linen girdle or a linen breeches, and he is also bidden to go to Euphrates, and to hide the girdle in a hole. He is again bidden to go the second time to Euphrates, and to draw the girdle from the hole, and he found it marred. The application follows; for God declares that he would thus deal with the Jews; though he had had them as a belt, he would yet cast them away. As he had adorned them, so he designed them to be an ornament to him; for the glory of God shines forth in his ChurJeremiah The Jews then, as Isaiah says, were a crown of glory and a royal diadem in God's hand. (Isaiah 62:3) Hence he compares them here most fitly to a belt or a girdle. Though then their condition was honorable, yet God threatens that he would cast them away; so that, being hidden, they might contract rottenness in a cavern of the Euphrates, that is, in Assyria and Chaldea. This is the meaning of the prophecy.

But no doubt a vision is here narrated, and not a real transaction, as some think, who regard Jeremiah as having gone there; but what can be imagined more absurd? He was, we know, continually engaged in his office of a teacher among his own people. Had he undertaken so long a journey, and that twice, it would have taken him some months. Hence contentious must he be, who urges the words of the Prophet, and holds that he must have gone to the Euphrates and hidden there his girdle. We know that this form of speaking is common and often used by the prophets: they narrate visions as facts.

We must also observe, that God might have spoken plainly and without any similitude; but as they were not only ignorant, but also stupid, it was found necessary

[327] It is rendered "{περίζωμα} --- a girdle,'' by the Septuagint; --- ``lumbare --- a garment for the loins,'' by the Vulgate; --- ``sudarium --- a napkin,'' by the Syriac; --- ``cingulum --- a girdle,'' by ``the Targum and Arabic. The Hebrew word never means anything but a girdle or belt, as the verb signifies to surround, to bind. Calvin makes no remark on the command, not to put it in water before he wore it. Various has been the explanation. The view the Rabbins give is inconsistent with the passage, --- that it was to be left dirty after wearing, that it might rot the sooner; for the Prophet is bidden, when commanded to wear it, not to wash it. Grotius and others think that he was to wear it as made, in its rough state, in order to shew the rude condition of the Jews when God adopted them. Venema is of the opinion that in order to shew that is was newly made, and had not been worn by another, nor polluted. Gataker says that the purpose was to shew that nothing was to be done by the Prophet to cause the girdle to rot, as wet might have done so, in order to prove that the rottenness proceeded only from the Jews themselves. Lowth regards it as intended to teach the Jews their corrupt state by nature, so that it was through favor or grace only that God adopted them; and he refers to Ezekiel 16:4. The last, which is nearly the same with the view of Grotius, seems the most suitable. --- Ed.

to reprove their torpidity by an external symbol. This was the reason why God confirmed the doctrine of his Prophet by an external representation. Had God said, ``Ye have been to me hitherto as a belt, ye were my ornament and my glory, not indeed through your merit or worthiness, but because I have united you to myself, that ye might be a holy people and a priestly kingdom; but now I am constrained to cast you away; and as a person throws from him and casts a girdle into some hole, so that after a long time he finds it rotten, so it will be with you, after having been hidden a long time beyond Euphrates; ye shall there contract rottenness, which will mar you altogether, so that your appearance will be very different, when a remnant of you shall come from thence:'' This indeed might have been sufficient; but in that state of security and dullness in which we know the Jews were, such a simple statement would not have so effectually penetrated into their hearts, as when this symbol was presented to them. The Prophet, therefore, says, that he was girded with a belt, that the belt was hid in a hole near Euphrates, and that there it became marred; and then he adds, so shall it be done to you. This statement, as I have said, more sharply touched the Jews, so that they saw that the judgment of God was at hand.

With regard to the similitude of girdle or breeches, we know how proudly the Jews gloried in the thought that God was bound to them; and he would have really been so, had they been in return faithful to him: but as they had become so disobedient and ungrateful, how could God be bound to them? He had indeed chosen them to be a people to himself, but this condition was added, that they were to be as a chaste wife, as he had become, according to what we have seen, a husband to them. But they had prostituted themselves and had become shamefully polluted with idols. As then they had perfidiously departed from their marriage engagement, was not God freed from his obligations? according to what is said by Isaiah,

``There is no need to give you a bill of divorcement, for your mother is an adulteress.'' (Isaiah 1:1)

The Prophet then, in this place, meant in a few words to shake off from the Jews those vain boastings in which they indulged, when they said that they were God's people and the holy seed of Abraham. ``True,'' he says, ``and I will concede more to you, that you were to God even as a belt, by which men usually adorn themselves; but God adopted you, that you might serve him chastely and faithfully; but now, as ye have made void his covenant, he will cast away this belt, which is a disgrace to him and not an ornament, and will throw it into a cavern where it will rot.'' Such is the view we are to take of this belt, as we shall hereafter see more clearly.

The Prophet, by saying that he went to the Euphrates, confirms what he had narrated: he did not indeed mean that he actually went there, but his object was to give the Jews a vivid representation. It is then what Rhetorians call a scene presented to the view; though the place is not changed, yet the thing is set before the eyes by a lively description. [328] Thus the Prophet, as the Jews were deaf, exhibited to

[328] Many agree with Calvin that this was a vision and not an actual transaction, such as Gataker, Lowth, Blayney, Adara Clarke, &c. Henry hesitates, but Scott seems to be strongly in favor of a real transaction. Bochart and Venema hold also the latter opinion, only they think that {פרת here does not mean ``Euphrates,'' but Ephrata, that is, Bethlehem, in Judea; but this cannot be maintained. Lowth refers to an instance where a vision is related as a fact, without any mention being made that it was a vision, that is, Genesis 15:5: God brought Abraham forth and shewed to him the stars; and yet it appears from Jeremiah 13:12 that the sun was not

their view what they would not hear. This is the reason why he says that he went. For the same purpose is what follows, that at the end of many days God had bidden him to take out the girdle Here also is signified the length of the exile. As to the hole in a rock, what is meant is disgrace; for without honor and esteem the Jews lived in banishment, in the same manner as though they were cast into a cavern. Hence by the hole is signified their ignoble and base condition, that they were like persons removed from the sight of all men and from the common light of day. By the end of many days, is meant, as I have said, the length of their exile, for in a short time they would not have become putrified, and except indeed this had been distinctly expressed, they would have never been convinced of the grievousness of the calamity which was nigh them. Hence he says that the days would be many, so that they might contract putridity while hidden in the hole.

As to the application of the Prophecy, the Prophet then distinctly describes it; but he sets forth with sufficient clearness the main point, when he says, Thus will I mar the stateliness (altitudinem, the altitude or height) of Judah and the great stateliness of Jerusalem Other interpreters unanimously render the word, pride; but as {גאון} gaun, may be taken in two senses, it means here, I have no doubt, excellency, and this will appear more fully from what follows. [329] The word then signifies here that dignity with which God had favored the seed of Abraham, when he intended them to be an ornament to himself. So it is said in Exodus 15:7,

``In thy greatness thou wilt destroy the nations.''

And in Isaiah he says,

``I will make thee the excellency of ages.'' (Isaiah 60:15)

There no doubt it is to be taken in a good sense. And these things harmonize together, --- that God had prepared the Jews for himself as a belt, and then that he cast them from him into a cavern, where they would be for a time without any light and without any glory.

The import of this clause then is, ``Though the dignity of Judah and Jerusalem has been great, (for the people whom God had adopted were renowned according to what is said in Deuteronomy 4) though then the stateliness of Judah and Jerusalem has been great, yet I will mar it.'' We see how the Prophet takes from the Jews that false confidence by which they deceived themselves. They might indeed have gloried in God, had they acted truly and from the heart: but when they arrogated all things to themselves, and deprived God of his authority, whose subjects they were, how great was their vanity and folly, and how ridiculous always to profess his sacred name, and to say, We are God's people? for he was no God to them, as they esteemed him as nothing; nay, they disdainfully and reproachfully rejected his yoke. We hence see that the word {גאון} gaun, is to be taken here in a good sense. The Prophet at the same time reproachfully taunts them, that they abused the name of God and falsely pretended to be his people and heritage. The rest we cannot finish; we shall go on

set. Blayney remarks, that ``the same supposition of a vision must be admitted in other cases, particularly Jeremiah 25:15-29.'' Gataker refers to similar instances in Ezekiel 8:3; Ezekiel 11:24. It was most probably a vision; and the Prophet related to the people what God had in a supernatural way exhibited to him. --- Ed.

[329] It is strangely rendered "reproach — {ὄζρων}," by the Septuagint, but ``pride'' by the Vulgate, --- ``the haughty ones,'' by the Syriac, --- ``insolence'' by the Arabic, and ``strength'' by the Targum. Blayney agrees with Calvin and renders it ``excellency,'' and Horsley, ``glory.'' --- Ed.

with the subject to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as so many of the people who have been gathered by thee, that they might be the body of thine only-begotten Son, have fallen away, and have by their ingratitude alienated themselves from the hope of eternal salvation, --- O grant, that they may again at this day be united together, and hold with us the true unity of faith, so that with one heart and one mouth we may profess thee as our God and Father, and so learn to swear by thy name, that we may acknowledge thee as our Judge, and ascribe to thee all power over us, until we shall at length enjoy that eternal inheritance, into the hope of which thou hast called us and daily invitest; us, through Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifty-Second

Jeremiah 13:10

10. This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing.

10. Populus hic malus [330] renuentes audire verba mea, ambulantes in pravitate cordis sui; et ambulant post deos alienos ut serviant ipsis et adorent ipsos; eterunt (collectivum nomen populi est singulare) tanquam baltheus hic, quiad nihilum prodest (qui ad quiquam non est utilis)

The Prophet said, according to what we observed yesterday, that the people would be like the belt which he had hidden in a hole and found putrified: but now the cause is expressed why God had resolved to treat them with so much severity. He then says that he would be an avenger, because the Jews had refused to obey his voice, and preferred their own inventions in walking after the hardness, or the wickedness of their own heart We hence see that the cause of this calamity was, that the people had rejected the teaching of the prophets. This indeed was far more grievous than if they had fallen away through mistake or ignorance, as we often see that men go miserably astray when the teaching of the truth is taken away. But when God shews the way, and prescribes what is right, when by his servants he exhorts his people, it is an inexcusable hardness if men repudiate such a kindness. But as this subject has been elsewhere largely treated, I shall only touch on it now briefly.

We see then that God threatens his people with extreme calamity, because they would not. bear to be taught by his prophets. Then he adds, that they had walked after the wickedness of their own heart, and had walked after foreign gods He in the first place complains that they had been so refractory as to prefer to obey their own impious inclinations than to be ruled by good and salutary counsels. But it was necessary to specify their crime; for had the Prophet only spoken of their hardness, they might have had their objections ready at hand; but when he said that they had

[330] These words are in the Septuagint and the Vulgate put in apposition with the last words of the preceding verse; but in the Syriac and Targum they form the nominative case to the verb "shall be," as in our version, near the end of the verse, the {ו before it being omitted; but the simpler mode of construction is to consider the substantive verb, is, to be understood in the first clause; then the whole verse would run thus, --- This is a wicked people, Who refuse to hear my words, Who walk in the resolutions of their own heart, And walk after foreign gods, To serve them and to bow down to them; And they shall be as this girdle, Which will not be good for anything. On ``the resolutions,'' see vol. 1. ``For anything,'' the {כל} here evidently means ``anything,'' as it means in some other places ``any,'' or any one --- Ed.

walked after foreign gods, there was no longer any room for evasion. The word to walk has a reference to a way. This metaphor has indeed a relation to something else; for men are not wont to take a course without going somewhere, we must therefore have some end in view when we walk along any way. Now, there is to be understood here a contrast, that the people despised the way pointed out to them by God, and that they had preferred to follow their own errors. God was ready to guide the Jews; by his own law; but they chose rather, as I have said, to abandon themselves to their own errors, as it were designedly.

He says, that they had walked after alien gods, that they might serve them, and prostrate themselves before them; for such is the meaning of the last verb. The Prophet no doubt repeats the same thing, for to serve is not only to obey, but also to worship. And hence is refuted that folly of the Papists, who imagine that worship (duliam) is not inconsistent with true religion; for they say that service (latriam) is due only to God, but that worship may be given to angels, to statues, or to dead men, as though God, forsooth! in condemning superstitions, did not use the word {עבד} obed, to serve. It hence follows that it is extremely ridiculous to devise two sorts of worship, one peculiar to God, and another common to angels as well as to men and dead idols. We now understand the import of this verse: the Prophet draws this conclusion, that the Jews would become like a useless or a putrefied belt. It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 13:11

11. For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.

11. Quia sicut adhaeret (vel, conjunctus est) baltheus renibus viri, sic conjunxeram (vel, conjunxi) mihi totam domuni Israel, et totam domum Jehudah, dicit Jehova, ut esset mihi in populum et in nomen et in laudem et in decus; et non audierunt.

He confirms what we noticed yesterday, --- that the Jews entertained a foolish confidence, and promised themselves perpetual happiness, because God had chosen them as his people. This indeed would have been a perpetual glory to them, had they not violated their pledged faith; but their defection rendered void God's covenant as far as they were concerned: for though God never suffered his faithfulness to fail, however false and perfidious they were, yet the adoption from which they had departed availed them nothing. But as they thought it an unalienable defense, the Prophet again repeats that they had been indeed adorned with singular gifts, but that, as they had not remained faithful, they would be deprived of them.

He indeed says, by way of concession, As a belt cleaves to the loins of man, so also have I joined to myself the house of Israel; for given to them is what they claimed. But at the same time, he reminds them that they only swelled with wind; for the less tolerable was their impiety, because they were so ungrateful to God. What, indeed, could have been more base or less excusable, than when those whom God had favored with so much honor rejected his bounty? Jeremiah then concedes

to them what they proudly boasted of; but he retorts it on their own heads, and shews how they deserved a heavier judgment, as they had despised so many of God's blessings.

We said yesterday that. the people is elsewhere compared to a crown and a diadem, as though God had declared that nothing was more precious to him than the children of Abraham. But the same thing is now expressed in other words, --- that he had prepared them for himself as a girdle, that they might be his people This was indeed a great dignity; but what follows exceeds it, --- that they might be to me a name, that is, that I might be celebrated by them; for it was his will to be called the God of Israel. What likeness there is between God and men! And yet, as though descending from his celestial glory, he united to himself the seed of Abraham, that he might also bind them to himself. The election of God was therefore like a bond of mutual union, so that he might not be separated from his people. Hence he says that they had been thus joined to him, that they might be for a name, and also for a praise and glory [331] Though these words are nearly of the same meaning, yet no doubt they are put together for the sake of amplification. God, therefore, intended to exaggerate more fully the sin of the people, by saying that he had done so much for them, in order that he might be celebrated by them, and that his praise and his glory might dwell among them.

He at last adds, They have not heard Had God only commanded what he might have justly required, not to obey his authority would have been an inexcusable wickedness in the people; but as he had so freely offered himself and all other things to them, what a base and detestable ingratitude it was in them to reject blessings so many and so valuable? We hence see that the mouths of the Jews are here completely closed, so that they could not expostulate with God, and complain that he was too rigid, for they had in an extreme degree provoked his wrath, having not only rejected his yoke, but also refused his offered favors. It follows ---

Jeremiah 13:12-14

12 Therefore thou shalt speak unto them this word; Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine: and they shall say unto thee, Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine?

12. Dices etiam illis (hoc est, annuntiabis) hunc sermonem, Sic dicit Jehova, Deus Israel, Omnis lagena (alii vertunt, utrem, sed hoc loco parum interest, omnis ergo lagena) implebitur vino: et dicent tibi, An non sciendo scimus (hoc est, An nesciendo non scimus) quod omnis lagena implebitur vino?

13. Then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit upon David's throne, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with drunkenness.

13. Tunc dices illis, Sic dicit Jehova, Ecce ego implens (vel, impleo) omnes habitatores terrae hujus, et omnes reges qui sedent pro Davidae super solium ejus, et sacerdotes et prophetas, et omnes incolas Jerosolymae ebrietate.

[331] "Name" means here renown; "praise," celebrity or commendation; and "glory," ornament, decoration, or beauty. The three words are found together, though not in exactly the same order, in Deuteronomy 26:19. There the order is, praise, name, and honor, which is rendered here "glory." See Isaiah 43:21; Isaiah 61:11; Isaiah 63:12. — Ed.

14. And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the LORD: I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them.

14. Et collidam eos (alii vertunt, dispergam; proprie significat violenter disjicere; hic apte reddetur collidere; collidam ergo) quenque ad fratrem suum et patres et filios simul, dicit Jehova; non parcam et non ero propitius, (idem significant, sunt synonyma) et non miserabor a perdendo (hoc est, quin perdam) ipsos.

The Prophet denounces here by another similitude the vengeance of God, for he says that all would be filled with drunkenness: but he is bidden at first simply to set before them the metaphor, Every bottle, or flagon, he says, shall be filled with wine The word {רבל}, ubel, means a bladder; but the word bottle is more suitable here. [332] Bladders were wont in those countries to be filled with water and with wine, as the custom is still in the east; as we see at this day that oil is put in bladders and thus carried, so bladders are commonly used there to carry water and wine; but as it is added, I will dash them against one another, it is better to use the word bottles, or flagons.

This general statement might have appeared to be of no weight; for what instruction does this contain, ``Every bottle shall be filled with wine?'' It is like what one might say, --- that a tankard is made to carry wine, and that bowls are made for drinking: this is well known, even to children. And then it might have been said that this was unworthy of a prophet. ``Eh! what dost thou say? Thou sayest that bottles are the receptacles of wine, even as a hat is made to cover the head, or clothes to keep off the cold; but thou seemest to mock us with childish trifles.'' We also find that the Prophet's address was thus objected to, for they contemptuously and proudly answered, ``What! do we not know that bottles are prepared for the purpose of preserving wine? But what dost thou mean? Thou boastest of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: how strange is this? Thou art, like an angel come down from heaven; thou pretendest the name of God, and professest to have the authority of a prophet; now, what does this mean, that bottles are filled with wine?'' But it was God's particular object thus to rouse the people, who were asleep in their delusions, and who were also by no means attentive to spiritual instruction. It was then his purpose to shew, by the most trifling, and as it were by frivolous things, that they were not possessed of so much clear-sightedness as to perceive even that which was most evident. They indeed, all knew that bottles were made for wine; but they did not understand that they were the bottles, or were like bottles. We have indeed said that they were inflated with so much arrogance that they seemed like hard rocks; and hence was their contempt of all threatenings, because they did not consider what they were. The Prophet then says that they were like bottles; though God had indeed chosen them for an excellent use, yet, forgetful of their frailty, they had marred their own excellency, so that they were no longer of any use, except that God would inebriate them with giddiness and also with calamities.

We hence see why God had commanded a general truth to be here announced

[332] It is not true that the word ever means a bladder, though so rendered by the Septuagint and the Targum. The Vulgate has “laguncula — a little flagon,” and Syriac “dolium, — a tub.” It means a jug or jar. Blayney has “vessel.” — Ed.

which was received with indifference and contempt; it was, that an opportunity might be given to the Prophet to touch to the quick those stupid men to whom their own state was wholly unknown. It had been said that they were like mountains, because they had as their foundation the free election of God; but as they had in them no firmness and no constancy of faith, but had decayed, their glory had as it were melted away; and though they still retained an outward appearance, yet they were like brittle vessels; and so their fragility is here better expressed by the Prophet than if, in a plain sentence, he had said, ``As a bottle is filled with wine, so will the Lord fill you with drunkenness.'' Had he thus spoken, there would not have been so much force in the prediction; but when they answered with disdain, ``This is known even to children,'' they were then told what more sensibly touched them, --- that they were like bottles. [333]

It may now be asked, What was this drunkenness which the Prophet announces? It may be understood in two ways, --- either that God would give them up to a reprobate mind, --- or that he would make them drunk with evils and calamities; for when God deprives men of a right mind, it is to prepare them for extreme vengeance. But the Prophet seems to have something further in view --- that this people would be given up to the most grievous evils, which would wholly fill them with amazement. Yet it appears from the context that the former evil is intended here; for he says, I will dash them one against another, every one against his brother, even the fathers and sons together; and thus they were all to be broken as it were in pieces. God then not only points out the calamity which was nigh the Jews, but also the manner of it; that is, that every one would draw his own brethren to ruin, as though they inflicted wounds on one another. But God says first generally, I will fill all the inhabitants of the land with drunkenness, and then he explains the effect, such as I have stated.

But he afterwards speaks of the whole people, including the kings, priests, and prophets, so that he excepts no order of men, however honorable; and this express mention of different orders was altogether necessary, for kings thought that they ought not to have been blended with the common people. The priests also regarded themselves as sacred, and a similar pride possessed the false prophets. But Jeremiah includes them all, without exception, in the same bundle, as though he had said, --- ``The majesty of kings shall not deliver them from God's judgment, nor shall the priests be safe on account of their dignity, nor shall it avail the false prophets to boast of that noble and illustrious office which they discharge.'' This prediction was no doubt regarded as very unjust; for we know with what high commendations God had spoken of the kingdom of David. As to the priesthood, we also know that it was a type of the priesthood of Christ, and also that the whole tribe of Levi was counted sacred to God. It could not therefore be but that Jeremiah must have greatly exasperated the minds of all by thus threatening kings as well as priests.

But we hence gather, --- that there is nothing so high and so illustrious on earth,

[333] With regard to this comparison, Gataker says, “A type taken from what they much loved, liked, and looked after; for they loved and looked after the flagons of wine, Hosea 3:1; and those prophets best pleased them who prophesied of wine and strong drink, Micah 2:11. God therefore sendeth his prophet to them with a prophecy of wine, but of other wine than they expected.”

which ought not to be made to submit, when the power and glory of God, and the authority of celestial truth, are to be vindicated. Whatever then is precious and excellent in the world must come to nothing, if it derogates even in the least degree from the glory of God or from the authority of his truth: and yet kings and priests dared to oppose the word of God. No wonder then, that the Prophet should thrust them down from their elevations and compare them to bottles: he thus treads under foot that frail glory by which they sought to obscure God himself. And as the name of David was, as it were, sacred among that people, in order to shake off this vain confidence, the Prophet says, --- ``Though kings sit on the throne of David and be his successors and posterity, yet God will not spare them.'' [334] And hence also it appears how foolishly the Papal clergy at this day bring forward against us their privileges and their dignity. Doubtless, whatever these unprincipled men may claim for themselves, they cannot yet make themselves equal to the Levitical priests: and yet we see that it availed them nothing, that God had set them apart for himself, because they had abused their power. There is, therefore, no reason for the Pope and his clergy, the very filth of the world, to be at this day so proud. We now perceive the design of the words, when mention is made of kings, priests, and prophets.

It must, however, be observed, that, he does not speak here of faithful prophets, but of those who wore the mask, while yet they brought nothing but chaff instead of wheat, as we shall hereafter see. He then uses the word prophets in an improper sense, for he applies it to false teachers, as we do at this day, when we speak of those savages who boast that they are bishops and prelates and governors: we indeed concede to them these titles, but it does not follow that they justly deserve to be counted bishops, though they are so called. In the same way then does Jeremiah speak here of those who were called prophets, who yet were wholly unworthy of the office.

He then speaks of the collision to which we have referred, --- I will cause them to tear or break one another in pieces. Some render the word ``scatter;'' but scattering does by no means comport with the words, every one, against his brother, etc. [335] We hence see that the meaning is much more suitable when we render the words, I will dash them, every one against his brother, and then, even the fathers and the sons together; so that they might tear one another by a mutual conflict. And hence, as I have said, Jeremiah not only foretells the destruction of the people, but also points out the manner of it; for they would become so void of common prudence, that they would willfully destroy one another, as though they were given up to mutual

[334] The clause, literally rendered, would convey this meaning, — And the kings who sit for David on his throne. "For David," that is, as his representatives. "In David's stead," is the rendering of Gataker and Blayney. The word "even" before "the kings" in our version, is improper; for what follows is not a specification of what is gone before, as "the inhabitants of Jerusalem," at the end of the verse, is in contrast with "all the inhabitants of this land," that is, the people of the country — Ed.

[335] The word seems to mean shattering or breaking in pieces, and in a secondary sense, scattering, as the effect. The early versions give the latter meaning, scattering, but, as Calvin says, inconsistently with the rest of the clause. The Targum gives in effect the first sense, "I will cause them to rush, each on his brother." The word "dash" is the most suitable, or dash to pieces, — And I will dash them to pieces, each against his brother, Both the fathers and the sons together, saith Jehovah. The allusion is to the bottles: they would be broken like brittle vessels, when thrown one against another. — Ed.

slaughter. They gloried, we know, in their number, but the Prophet shews that this would be no protection to them, but, on the contrary, the cause of their ruin; for the Lord would so blind them, that they would fight with one another, and thus perish without any foreign enemy.

He then adds, I will not spare, I will not spare, [336] I will not have mercy He repeats three times that he would not be propitious to them. It would have been sufficient to declare this once, were they so teachable and attentive as really to consider the threatenings announced to them; but being so torpid as they were, it was necessary to repeat the same thing often; not as though there was anything ambiguous or obscure in the message itself, but because hardly any vehemence was sufficient to rouse hearts so obstinate. We hence see why the Prophet repeated the same thing so often. He, however, does not employ words uselessly: whenever God repeats the promises of his favor, he does not utter words heedlessly and without reason; but since he sees that there is in us so much dulness, that one promise is not sufficient, he confirms it by repetitions; so also when he sees that men, owing to their stupidity, cannot be moved nor terrified by his threatenings, he repeats them, that they may have more weight. He in short declares, that it was all over with that people, so that he does not now call the wicked and the rebellious to repentance, but speaks to them as to men past remedy. This is the meaning.

And he adds, Until I shall consume them [337] This refers to the whole body of the people. God, in the meantime, still preserved, in a wonderful manner and by hidden means, a remnant, as it has appeared elsewhere: but yet God took that vengeance, which is here denounced on the people as a body; for it was as it were a general death, when they were all driven into exile and everywhere scattered. Now as the Lord in so great a ruin never forgot his covenant, but some seed still remained safe and secure; so what is said here, I will not have mercy until I shall consume them, is not inconsistent with the promise of mercy elsewhere given, when he declares that he is long-suffering and plenteous in mercy. (Numbers 14:18; Psalm 103:8) Though God then destroyed his people in so dreadful a manner, yet he did not divest himself of his own nature, nor cast away his mercy; but he executed his judgments on the reprobate in a way so wonderful, that he yet lost nothing of his eternal mercy and remained still faithful as to his election. It follows ---

Jeremiah 13:15-16

15 Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the LORD hath spoken.

15 Audite et auscultate; ne elevemini, quia Jehova loquutus est.

16 Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your

[336] The verbs are different, and so Calvin renders them in the text; but not here. There is no unanimity in the versions as to these verbs and the one which follows. The first means to be tender so as to relent; the second, to spare so as not to inflict punishment, to connive; and the third, to feel pity or compassion. They may be rendered thus, — I will not relent, nor will I spare; Nor will I pity, so as not to destroy them. The two lines announce the same thing, only the last is stronger and more specific. Pitying or commiserating is stronger than relenting, and not destroying describes the act, while sparing is a general term. — Ed.

[337] The sentence literally is, “From consuming,” or destroying, “them.” The preposition {,{n mem, here has the force of a negative. It is a sort of an elliptic phrase, which, though understood in the original, yet requires a supplement in a translation, --- ``I will not pity, so as to abstain from consuming them.'' But a literal rendering in Welsh would be understood, --- Ae ni resynav rhag eu difetha. The preposition ``rhag,'' which ordinarily means from, signifies here from not, which is exactly the Hebrew. --- Ed.

feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.

16. Date Jehovae Deo vestro gloriam priusquam obtenebrescere faciat, et priusquam offendant pedes vestri ad montes tenebrarum, speretisque lucem, et ponat in umbram mortis et in caliginem.

The Prophet shews here more fully what we have stated, --- that so refractory was the temper of those with whom he had to do, that it was necessary to use various means to subdue them. And it was not in vain that he added this exhortation, which manifests indignation; nor was it without displeasure that he required a hearing, Hear ye, and give ear; be not lifted up, for the Lord is he who speaks Then we may hence gather, either that Jeremiah was derided, or that his words were disregarded by the Jews; for this is intimated by the words, For Jehovah has spoken; [338] for were they of themselves persuaded, that he announced what God had commanded him, these words would have been used to no purpose. But we shall elsewhere see, that he was deemed an impostor, and that he was assailed by many reproofs and curses.

He therefore defends here his calling from their calumnies and reproaches, when he says, that God had spoken; for by these words he affirms that he brought nothing of his own, but spoke as it were from the mouth of God, or, which is the same thing, that he was the instrument of the Holy Spirit; and he said this, in order that they might know that they in vain contended with him, as the contest was between them and God. And on this account he says, Hear ye, and give ear; for he saw that they were deaf and torpid, and had need of many stimulants. He at the same time points out the cause and the source of evil by saying, Be ye not lifted up [339] The cause then of their contumacy was pride, for they dared to quarrel with God. So also the main principle of obedience is humility, that is, when men acknowledge that they are nothing and ascribe to God what is due to him.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are by nature frail vessels, and our frailty is such that we of ourselves melt away, and when we become stronger we cannot stand by our own power, --- O grant, that being supported by thy power, we may indeed rejoice in the perpetuity of our salvation, not indeed relying on any earthly protection, but because thou hast been pleased to choose us as thy people: and may we at the same time so pursue the course of our life, that we may not by our perfidy exclude thy grace from us, but give place to thee, that we may be more and more enriched by those gifts which pertain to the hope of a future life, until we shall at length come to that full and perfect happiness, in thy celestial kingdom, which is laid up for us by Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifty-Third

Jeremiah 13:16

16 Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your

[338] This may be rendered more consistently with the context, “For Jehovah speaks,” or is speaking: for the reference evidently is to what was now addressed to them. — Ed.

[339] So all the versions and the Targum. Gataker renders it, “Be ye not haughty,” which is no doubt the meaning. The verb means to be high, lofty, or elevated, and so to be elevated as to be haughty, proud. See Isaiah 3:16. Men, creatures of the dust, too high and elevated to hear what God said to them! This is the case still. What a monstrous thing! — Ed.

feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.

16. Date Jehovae Deo vestro gloriam priusquam obtenebrescere faciat, et priusquam offendant pedes vestri ad montes tenebrarum, speretisque lucem, et ponat in umbram mortis et in caliginem.

Jeremiah pursues the subject, which we began to explain yesterday, for he saw that the Jews were but little moved by what he taught them. He bid them. to regard what he said as coming from God, and told them that they could by no means succeed by their pride. For the same purpose he now adds, Give glory to Jehovah your God To give glory to God is elsewhere taken for confessing the truth in his name; for when Joshua abjured Achan, he used these words, ``Give glory to God, my son;'' that is, As I have set God before you as a judge, beware lest you should think that if you lie you can escape his judgment. (Joshua 7:19) But here, to give glory to God, is the same as to ascribe to him what properly belongs to him, or to acknowledge his power so as to be submissive to his word: for if we deny faith to the prophets; we rob God of his glory, as we thus disown his power, and, as far as we can, diminish his glory. How indeed can we ascribe glory to God except by acknowledging him to be the fountain of all wisdom, justice, and power, and especially by trembling at his sacred word? Whosoever then does not fear and reverence God, whosoever does not believe his word, he robs him of his glory. We hence see that all the unbelieving, though they may testify the contrary by their mouths, are yet in reality enemies to God's glory and deprive him of it.

This subject ought to be carefully noticed; for all ought to dread such a sacrilege as this, and yet there is no one who takes sufficient heed in this respect. We then see what instruction this expression conveys; it is as though he had said, that the Jews had hitherto acted contemptuously towards God, for they trembled not before him, as they had no faith in his word: and that it was now time for him to set God before them as their Judge, and also for them to know that they ought to have believed whatever God declared to them by his servants.

He says, Before he introduces darkness Others render it by a single word, ``Before it grows dark,'' but as the verb is in Hiphil, it ought to be taken in a causative sense. Some consider the word sun to be understood, but without reason; for the sun is not said to send darkness by its setting. But the Prophet removes all ambiguity by the words which immediately follow in the second clause, And turn light to the shadow of death, and turn it to thick darkness In these words the Prophet no doubt refers to God, so that the word God, used at the beginning of the verse, is to be understood here. [340]

Before God, he then says, sends darkness, and before your feet stumble on the mountains of obscurity The word {נשף}, neshiph, means the evening and the twilight; it means also the obscure light before the rising of the sun; but it is often taken

[340] All the versions and the Targum render the first verb intransitively, “Before it grows dark:” but Montanus, Pagninus, Piscator and Junius and Tremellius, give it a transitive meaning, as Calvin does, and no doubt correctly, for it is in Hiphil, “Before he causes or brings darkness;” or it may be rendered, “Before he makes it dark.” Blayney follows the early versions, but Gataker, Lowth, and Venema, the latter versions; and the conclusion of the verse confirms, as Calvin says, this meaning. — Ed.

for the whole night. We can render the words, ``the mountains of density.'' But the word, no doubt, means here obscurity. Some think that mountains are to be here taken metaphorically for Egypt; for the Jews were wont to flee there in their troubles. But there are safer recesses on mountains than on the plains; yet I know not whether this sense will be very suitable here. On the contrary, I prefer to regard the words as preceded by {כ}, caph, a particle of likeness, which is often understood, and the meaning would be thus suitable, ``Before your feet stumble as on obscure mountains:'' for there is more light on level grounds than on mountains, for darkness often fills narrow passes: the sun cannot penetrate there; and also the evening does not come on so soon on plains as in the recesses of mountains; for the Prophet refers not to the summits but to the narrow valleys, which receive not the oblique rays of the sun but for a few hours. But what if we give this rendering? ``Before your feet stumble at the mountains of darkness;'' for {אל}, al, has the meaning of at, [341] as though the Prophet had said, that the darkness would be so thick that they could not discern mountains opposite them. As in the twilight or in darkness a traveler stumbles at the smallest stones, so also, when the darkness is very thick, even mountains are not perceived. It thus often happens that a person stumbles at mountains, and finds by his feet and his hands a stumblingblock before he perceives it by his eyes. As to myself, I wholly think that this is the right explanation, Before then your feet stumble at the dark mountains

He afterwards adds, When ye hope for light, he turns it to the shadow of death The word {צלמות}, tsalmut, as I have said elsewhere, is thought by grammarians to be composed of {צל} tsal, ``shadow,'' and of {מות} mut, which means ``death,'' and they render it ``fatal darkness.'' Then what he says is, ``Before God turns light to darkness, turns it to thick darkness, give to him his glory.'' And. hence we perceive more clearly what I have already referred to, that the verb {יחשיך}, icheshik, ``will cause darkness,'' ought to be applied to God.

But the sum of the whole is this, that they could anticipate God's judgment by admitting him in time as their Judge, and also by receiving his word with more reverence than they had previously done. At the same time he declares that their hope was vain if they promised themselves light. But we must know that light is here to be taken metaphorically, as in many other places, and darkness also, its opposite, is to be so taken. Darkness means adversities, and light, peace and prosperity. The Prophet then says that the Jews deceived themselves, if they thought that their happiness would be perpetual, if they despised God and his prophets; and why? because it would have been the same as to disarm or to deprive him of his power, as though he was not the Judge of the world. He in short shews, that there was nigh at hand a most dreadful vengeance, except the Jews in time anticipated it and submitted

[341] This is a mistake, the preposition is {{על which means on, upon, etc. Our version of this sentence is in accordance with the early versions: it is indeed literally the Septuagint and the Vulgate. Yet it is not the original. The verb is in Hithpael, and means to strike or smite together, or against one another. The literal rendering is the following, --- Before your feet smite one against the other, On the mountains of gloominess (i.e. gloomy mountains.) It is true the word for ``gloominess'' means sometimes the twilight; but here it seems to signify a state somewhat dark or obscure. To wander and to stumble on gloomy mountains betokens the miserable condition of fugitives: and this is what is meant here. See Jeremiah 16:16; Ezekiel 7:16. Then what follows might be thus rendered, --- When ye shall look anxiously for light, Then will he make it the shadow of death, He will turn it to thick darkness. When two vaus occur in a sentence, they may often be rendered when and then. The change proposed as to the last verb is not at all necessary. Literally it is, ``He will set it (to be) for thick darkness.'' --- Ed.

themselves to God. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 13:17

17 But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD'S flock is carried away captive.

17 Quod si non audieritis hoc, in areanis (hoc est, in secreto) lugebit anima mea a facie superbia (hoc est, propter superbiam) et lachrymando lachrymabitur, et descendet oculus meus in lachrymas (de hac locutione vidimut cap. 9; diffluet ergo oculus meus in lachrymae; ad verbum, et descendet oculus meus lachryma) quoniam abductus est (captus est) grex Jehovae.

The Prophet had indirectly threatened them; but yet there was some hope of pardon, provided the Jews anticipated God's judgment in time and humbled themselves before him. He now declares more clearly that a most certain destruction was nigh at hand, If ye will not hear, he says, weep will my soul in secret But much weight is in what the Prophet intimates, that he would cease to address them, as though he had said, ``I have not hitherto left off to exhort you, for God has so commanded me; but there will be no remedy, if ye as usual harden yourselves against what I teach you. There remains then nothing now for me, except to hide myself in some secret place and there to mourn; for my prophetic office among you is at an end, as ye are unworthy of such a favor from God.''

He does not state simply, If ye will not hear, but he adds a pronoun, this, If ye will not hear this, or it: for the Jews might have raised an objection and said, that they were not disobedient to God, and had prophets among them, as it appeared yesterday; for there were those who deceived them by their flatteries. The Prophet then does not speak indistinctly, for that would have had no effect; but he expressly declares that they were to hear what he had said in the last verse: ``Except then,'' he says, ``ye give glory to God, I will leave you or bid you farewell, and will hide myself in some corner, and there bewail your miseries.'' When the Prophet said that nothing remained for him but weeping, he intimated that it was all over with them, and that their salvation was hopeless. The sum of the whole is, that they were not to be always favored with that which they were now despising, that is, to be warned by God's servants; for if they continued to despise all the prophets, God would withdraw such a favor from them.

The Prophet at the same time shows with what feelings he exercised his prophetic office; for though he knew that he was to perform, the part of an herald, and boldly to denounce on the Jews the calamity which we have observed; he yet ever felt so much pity in his soul, that he bewailed that perverseness which would prove their ruin. The Prophet then connected the two feelings together, so that with a bold and intrepid spirit he denounced vengeance on the Jews, and at the same time he felt commiseration and sympathy.

He then mentions the cause, For taken captive is the flock of Jehovah Jeremiah might have had indeed a regard also for his own blood. When, therefore, he saw the nation from which he himself sprung miserably perishing, he could not but mourn for their ruin: but he had an especial regard to the favor of God, as was the case also

with Paul, (Romans 9:2, 4, 5) for though he refers to his descent from the Israelites, and assigns this as a reason why he wished to be an anathema from Christ on their account, there were yet other reasons why he spoke highly of them; for he afterwards adds, that the covenant was theirs, that they derived their origin from the fathers, that from them Christ came according to the flesh, who is God, blessed for ever. Paul then so honored and valued the benefits with which the Jews were adorned, that he wished as it were to die for their salvation, and even wished to be an anathema from Christ. There is not the least doubt but Jeremiah for a similar reason adds now, that he would seek retirement or some hidden place where he might bewail the destruction of his people, for it was the flock of Jehovah [342] We hence see that it was God's covenant that made him to shed tears, for he saw that in a manner it failed through the fault of the people. It follows ---

Jeremiah 13:18

18 Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down: for your principalities shall come down, even the crown of your glory.

18 Dic regi et dominae, humiliamini (descendite) sedete (hoc est, jacete) quia descendet a capitibus vestris corona decoris vestri (alii vertunt, sescendet altitudines vestrae, pro altitudo vestra; et appositive legunt quod sequitur, corona decoris vestri)

The Prophet is here bidden to address his discourse directly to King Jehoiakim and his mother; for the term lady is not to be taken for the queen, the wife of Jehoiakim, but for his mother, who was then his associate in the kingdom, and possessed great authority. [343] And there is no doubt but that God thus intended to rouse more fully the community in general; that is, by shewing that he would not spare, no, not the king nor the queen. But we may hence also learn what has already been observed, that the truth announced by the prophets is superior to all the greatness of the world. For it was said before to Jeremiah, ``Reprove mountains and rebuke hills;'' [344] and still farther,

``Behold, I have set thee over kingdoms and nations, to pull down and to pluck up,'' etc., (Jeremiah 1:10)

This ought to be carefully noticed; for kings and those who are eminent in the world, think that they are not only, by a singular privilege, exempt from all laws, but

[342] The whole verse may be thus rendered, — But if ye will not hear, weep in secret places Will my soul, on account of your haughtiness; Yea, bewailing it will bewail, And pour down will mine eye the tear, When taken captive is the flock of Jehovah. The word for "haughtiness," {,{גוה is rendered ``insolence'' by the Septuagint and Arabic; ``pride'' by the Vulgate, and ``affliction'' by the Syriac. The word is commonly derived from ,{גאה} to swell, to be high, to be elated. It is found in this sense in two other places, Job 33:17, and Daniel 4:37; and in a good sense, elevation, in Job 22:29. It seems to be a contraction, in full .{גאוה} See Psalm 36:12; Proverbs 29:23. This being the meaning of the word, the view of Calvin cannot be admitted. There is an evident reference to what is said in Jeremiah 13:15, ``Be ye not lifted up,'' or, ``be ye not haughty.'' The cause of his weeping was their haughtiness in not hearing God speaking to them.- Ed.

[343] So Gataker and Lowth; and they refer to 2 Kings 24:12, and to Jeremiah 22:26. From this circumstance it is gathered that this prophecy was delivered in the short reign of that king, which lasted only three months. The word "queen," in our version, is rendered "mistress or lady — domina," by Calvin, but "potentates" by the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic; "governess — dominatrix," by the Vulgate; and "queen" by the Targum. The word means governess; it is rendered "mistress" in Genesis 16:4, 8; "lady" in Isaiah 47:5, 7; and "queen" in 2 Kings 10:13. — Ed.

[344] There is an oversight here; the passage referred to is in Micah 6:1; nor is it a right view of it. See vol. 3 on the Minor Prophets, p. 328. — Ed.

also free from every obligation to observe modesty and to avoid shame. Hence it is, that they from their elevation despise God and his prophets. Here God shews, that he supplied the prophets with his word for this end, --- that they might close their eyes to all the splendor of the world, and shew no respect of persons, but pull down every height, and bring to order everything that is elevated in this world. Paul also teaches us, that ministers of the gospel are endued with this power;

``Given to us,'' he says, ``is power against every height that exalteth itself against Christ.''

(2 Corinthians 10:5)

And hence we must observe, that all who are chosen to the office of teaching, cannot faithfully discharge their duty except they boldly, and with intrepid spirit, dare to reprove both kings and queens; for the word of God is not to be restricted to the common people or men in humble life, but it subjects to itself all, from the least to the greatest. This prophecy was no doubt very bitter to the king as well as to the common people; but it behooved Jeremiah to discharge faithfully his office; and this was also necessary, for the king Jehoiakim and his mother thought that they could not possibly be dethroned.

He therefore bids them to descend and to lie down; that is, he bids them to forget their ancient greatness. He does not simply exhort them to repent, but shews, that as they had been so refractory in their pride, the punishment of disgrace was nigh at hand, for the Lord would with a strong hand lay them prostrate. It is not then an exhortation that the Prophet gives; but he only foretells what they little thought of, --- that they in vain flattered themselves, for the Lord would in a short time expose them to reproach by casting them down.

And this is evident from what is added, For descend shall the crown of your honor; that is, it shall be taken away from your highnesses, or from your eminencies, or from your heads; for the word {ראשה}, rashe, means sometimes the head. [345] But some think that it means here eminencies, and that ``the magnificent crown'' is put here in apposition.

I have omitted, if I mistake not, to notice one thing; that is, the pride mentioned by the Prophet; except ye hear, weep will my soul in secret on account of pride Interpreters render it ``your pride;'' that is, the pride with which the Jews were filled; but I am inclined to take a different view, that the Prophet speaks here of the pride or the great power of those enemies whom the Jews then did not in any degree fear. ``Since then,'' says the Prophet, ``ye are so secure, I will retire and weep by myself, and my soul by mourning shall mourn, yea, my eye shall flow down with tears, on account of the pride of the enemies, who are now so much despised by you;'' Let us now proceed ---

Jeremiah 13:19

[345] All the early versions render the words, "Fallen from your head has the crown of your glory." Our version is that of Montanus. If {{מ be a formative, then the word, in every instance in which it occurs, means bolsters or pillows, things for the head to rest on. The word for head has commonly a masculine termination in the plural number; but here it is feminine. The most literal rendering is the following: --- For bring down from your heads will he the crown of your glory. The latter words mean ``your glorious crown,'' the expression being an Hebraism. Our common version, as Blayney observes, violates grammar; for the gender of the verb ,{ירד} (which, the same author thinks, ought to be ,{יורד} future in Hiphil) is masculine, while the noun made its nominative is feminine. --- Ed

19 The cities of the south shall be shut up, and none shall open them: Judah shall be carried away captive all of it, it shall be wholly carried away captive.

19 Urbes Austri clausae sunt, et nemo qui aperiat; traductus est (vel, transmigravit) Jehudah totus, translatus est perfecte (perfectione, hoc est, in totum abductus est in captivitatem)

By the cities of the south, almost all understand the cities of the tribe of Judah, whose portion was towards the south; and by the cities being shut up, they consider that what is meant is, that they would be forsaken; for they say, that cities are open when they are frequented. But I am con- strained here also to take another view. I take the cities of the south to have been those of Egypt; for we know that the Jews looked there for a refuge, whenever they were attacked by the Assyrians or the Chaldeans. Since then they thought that Egypt would be to them a sort of an asylum, the Prophet declares that all these cities would be closed against them, and that there would be no one to open them; as though he had said, ``The Lord will drive you out, and will prevent you to take refuge there.''

He would doubtless have spoken more clearly had he meant the cities of Judah; and besides, as he was at Jerusalem, this way of speaking must have been ambiguous, and even improper; and we shall find him presently speaking of the Assyrians as being in the north. He now then warns them, that Egypt would be closed against them, though they at the same time expected that they would be safe there, and that an easily-borne exile was in their power. As then they foolishly trusted that they would be received by the Egyptians, the Prophet says, that the gates would be closed, and that there would be no one to open them. It then follows, carried away wholly has been Judah, carried away completely; [346] that is, ``Ye shall all be led away into Assyria and Babylon;'' which is the north country, according to what afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 13:20

20 Lift up your eyes, and behold them that come from the north: where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?

20 Levate oculos vestros, et aspicite venientesab aquilone: ubigrex qui datus fuerat tibi? Oves decoris tui?

We here see that Egypt and Chaldea are set in opposition, the one to the other; as though the Prophet had said, ``Whenever anything is said to you about the Chaldeans, ye turn your eyes to Egypt, as though that would be a quiet residence for you; but God will prevent you from having any escape there. Now see, see your enemies who are coming from another quarter, even from Chaldea. Lift up then your eyes.'' As they were so very intent on their present ease, he bids them to lift up their eyes, that they might see farther than they were wont to do.

He then says, Where is the flock which had been given to thee? and the sheep

[346] The ancient versions render these last words of the verse in the same way with our version and that of Calvin; but the Hebrew, as Blayney remarks, is not rightly rendered, though he unnecessarily makes {כלה a verb, and according to his construction it ought to be ;{כלתה} and he does not satisfactorily account for the last word, .{שלומים} The literal version I regard to be the following: --- The transmigration of Judah has been entire, --- The transmigration of retributions. The past time, as in the beginning of the verse, is to be used, though it is used for the future. The word ,{שלומים} is never found in an adverbial sense; and indeed it is found only once elsewhere as here, in the plural number, Isaiah 34:8; but thrice in this sense in the singular number, Deuteronomy 32:35; Hosea 9:7; Micah 7:3. The Targum favors this rendering, as it retains the idea of retribution. --- Ed.

of thy glory? It is through pity that the Prophet thus speaks; for he saw by the Spirit the whole land deserted, and in wonder he asks, ``What does this mean, that the flock is scattered which had been given to thee?'' He addresses the people under the character of a woman, as he does often in other places. [347] In short, he confirms what he had said before, --- that he would go to some secret place, if the people were not influenced by his doctrine, and that he would there by himself deplore their calamity; but he employs other words, and at the same time intimates, that he alone had eyes to see, as others were blind, for God had even taken from them understanding and discernment. The Prophet then shews here that he saw the dreadful desolation that was soon to come; and therefore as one astonished he asks, Where is the flock with which God had enriched the land? and further he asks, Where are the sheep which possessed a magnificent honor or beauty? It follows ---

Jeremiah 13:21

21 What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee? for thou hast taught them to be captains, and as chief over thee: shall not sorrows take thee, as a woman in travail?

21 Quid dices, cum visitaverit super to? Et tu (hoc est, atqui tu) docuisti (hoc est, assuefecisti) illos super to duces in caput: annon dolores apprehendent to tanquam mulierem parturientem?

As the Prophet observed that the Jews were in no way moved, he addressed them still further, and set before them what seemed then incredible, even the calamity, from which they thought they were able easily to defend themselves by means of their auxiliaries.

He then adds, What wilt thou then say? For the false teachers made a clamor, and whenever Jeremiah began to speak, they violently assailed him, and the common people also wantonly barked at him. As then they thus petulantly resisted God and his truths, the Prophet intimates that the time would come when they should become mute through shame: What wilt thou say then? he says, ``Ye are now very talkative, and God cannot obtain a hearing from you; but he will check your wantonness, when the enemy shall distress you.'' It is the same as though he had said, ``It will not be the time then for your loquacity, for the Lord will constrain you to be silent.''

Some refer to God what follows, When, he shall visit you; but it ought on the contrary to be applied to the Chaldeans; for he immediately adds, But thou hast accustomed them, etc. There is indeed a change or an anomaly of number, but this is common in the prophets. When he uses the singular, the head of the army is referred to, but afterwards the whole forces are included. What then wilt thou say, when the enemy shall visit thee? He then adds, But then, etc.; that is, ``If thou seekest to cast blame on others, when the Assyrians and the Chaldeans shall overwhelm thee, thou wilt attempt it in vain? for thou hast opened a passage for them, and hast accustomed them to be thy leaders over thy head.'' For the Assyrians had a long time before been sent for by the Israelites; and the Jews also had formed confederacies with the Chaldeans against the Assyrians, before these monarchies were united. As then they had called them in as auxiliaries, they had accustomed

[347] May not the queen regent, or governess, mentioned with the king in Jeremiah 13:18, be here meant? Sovereigns are called shepherds, and hence “flock” and “sheep” are here mentioned. — Ed.

them to rule, and, as it were, had set them over themselves. The case was similar to that of the Turks at this day, were they to pass over to these parts and exercise their authority; for it might be asked the French kings and their counsellors, ``Whose fault it is that the Turks come to us so easily? It is because ye have prepared for them the way by sea, because ye have bribed them, and your ports have been opened to them; and yet they have wilfully exercised the greatest cruelty towards your subjects. All these things have proceeded from yourselves; ye are therefore the authors of all these evils.'' So also now the Prophet upbraids the Jews, because they had accustomed the Chaldeans to be their leaders; and as they had set them over their own heads, he says to them, that it was no wonder that they were now so troublesome and grievous to them. [348]

He afterwards says, Shall not sorrows lay hold on thee as on a woman in travail? By this comparison he intimates, that the Jews gained nothing by their vain hopes; for when they should say, peace and security, destruction, such as they by no means expected, would suddenly come upon them. This similitude we know often occurs, and it is a very apt one; for a woman with child may be very cheerful and quietly enjoying herself, and yet a sudden pain may seize her. So also it will be with the wicked; they cannot now bear to hear anything sad or alarming, and they drive from them every fear as far as possible; but the more they harden themselves, the heavier is God's vengeance which follows them, and which will overtake them suddenly and unexpectedly. As then it was incredible to the Jews, that the Chaldeans would soon come to lay waste their land, he says to them, ``Surely sorrows will take hold on you, though you look not for them. Though a woman with child thinks not of her coming pain, yet it comes suddenly and cannot be driven away; so you will gain nothing by heedlessly promising to yourselves continual peace and quietness.'' I cannot finish what follows today if I go on farther; I shall therefore put it off to the next Lecture.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are so slothful to hear thee, yea, inasmuch as our minds are taken up with so many vanities so that we deceive ourselves, --- O grant, that thy Holy Spirit may so illuminate us, that we may not despise thy threatenings, but may learn to anticipate in time thy judgment, and thus obtain pardon; that being mindful of thy mercy, we may pursue the course of our calling, until we shall at length be received into that blessed rest, which has been obtained for us by thy only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifty-Fourth

Jeremiah 13:22

22 And if thou say in thine heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare.

22 Quod si dixeris in corde suc, cur (vel, ut quid) haec mala acciderunt mihi (occurrerunt mihi?) in multitudine (hoc est, propter multitudinem) iniquitatis tuae discoopertae sunt fimbriae tuae, et nudati calces tui (vel, plantae tuae nudatae sunt)

The Prophet again declares that God's judgment would be just, which he had

[348] The best rendering of this clause is as follows: — For thou hast taught them to be over the leaders in chief. It is the feminine gender that is still used; and the queen or governess may be addressed as the representative of the ruling power in the land. — Ed.

previously foretold; for hypocrites, we know, do not cease to quarrel with God, except they are often proved guilty; and it is always their object, where they cannot wholly excuse themselves, to extenuate in some measure their fault. The Prophet therefore here removes every pretense for evasion, and declares that they were wholly worthy of such a reward.

But his manner of speaking ought to be noticed, If thou wilt say in thine heart, etc. Hypocrites do not only claim for themselves righteousness before the world, but they also deceive themselves, and the devil so dementates them with a false persuasion, that they seek to be counted just before God. This then is what the Prophet sets forth when he says, If thou wilt say in thine heart, Why have these evils happened to me? [349] that is, if thou seekest by secret murmuring to contend with God, the answer is ready, --- Because of the multitude of thine iniquity, discovered are thy skirts, and thy heels are denuded.'' The multitude of iniquity he calls that perverse wickedness which prevailed among the Jews; for they had not ceased for a long time to provoke the wrath of God. Had they only once sinned, or had been guilty of one kind of sin, there would have been some hope of pardon, at least God would not have executed a punishment so severe; but as there had been an uninterrupted course of sinning, the Prophet shews that it would not be right to spare them any longer.

As to the simile, it is a form of speaking often used by the prophets, that is, to denude the soles of the feet, and to discover the skirts. We know that; men clothe themselves, not only to preserve them from cold. but that they also cover the body for the sake of modesty: there is therefore a twofold use of garments, the one occasioned by necessity, and the other by decency. As then clothes are partly made for this end --- to cover what could not be decently shewn or left bare without shame, the prophets use this mode of speaking when they have in view to shew that one is exposed to public reproaJeremiah [350] It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 13:23

23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

23 An mutabit (sic proprie vertitur) Ethiopa pellem suam, et pardus maculas suas (aut, varietates, nam nomen hoc duplicatum deducitur a {חבר}, quod significat congregare, significat etiam livorem, accipitur vero hic pro maculis) etiam tu poteris ad benefaciendum, doctus ad malum?

God declares in this verse, that the people were so hardened in their wickedness, that there was no hope of their repentance. This is the sum of what is said. But it was a very bitter reproof for the Prophet to say that his own nation were past hope --- that they had so entirely given themselves up to their vices that they were no

[349] The verb is here in the singular, and is followed by a nominative in the plural; the very same anomaly exists in Welsh. The line would be literally the same in that language, — Pam y digwyddodd i mi y pethau hyn? But if "these things" preceded the verb, it would be in the plural. — Ed.

[350] The three last lines are as follows: — For the number of thine iniquity Discovered have been thy skirts, Violently stripped off have been thy heels. "Skirts" here stand for the parts covered by them, and "heels" for the sandals which were worn. Both the Septuagint and the Vulgate mention the parts, and not skirts — "the hinder parts," "the uncomely parts," but they retain the word "heels." The metonomy exists, no doubt, as to both. The Syriac has "skirts" and "ankles." The Targum gives the meaning, "confusion" and "ignominy." The past time is used for the future. — Ed.

longer healable.

But he uses a comparison, --- Can the Ethiopian, [351] he says, change his skin? Blackness is inherent in the skin of the Ethiopians, as it is well known. Were they then to wash themselves a hundred times daily, they could not put off their blackness. The same also must be said of leopards or panthers, and we know that these animals are besprinkled with spots. Such then is the spotted character of the leopard or panther, [352] that whatever might be done to him he would still retain his color. We now then see what the Prophet means --- that the Jews were so corrupted by long habit that they could not repent, for the devil had so enslaved them that they were not in their right mind; they no longer had any discernment, and could not discriminate between good and evil.

Learned men in our age do not wisely refer to this passage, when they seek to prove that there is no free-will in man; for it is not simply the nature of man that is spoken of here, but the habit that is contracted by long practice. Aristotle, a strong advocate of free will, confesses that it is not in man's power to do right, when he is so immersed in his own vices as to have lost a free choice, (7. Lib. Ethicon) and this also is what experience proves. We hence see that this passage is improperly adduced to prove a sentiment which is yet true, and fully confirmed by many passages of Scripture.

Jeremiah, then, does not here refer to man's nature as he is when he comes from the womb; but he condemns the Jews for contracting such a habit by long practice. As, then, they had hardened themselves in doing evil, he says that they could not repent, that wickedness had become inherent, or firmly fixed in their hearts, like the blackness which is inherent in the skin of the Ethiopians, or the spots which belong to the leopards or panthers.

We may at the same time gather from this passage a useful doctrine --- that men become so corrupt, by sinful habits and sinful indulgence, that the devil takes away from them every desire and care for acting rightly, so that, in a word, they become wholly irreclaimable, as we see to be the case with regard to bodily diseases; for a chronic disease, in most instances, so corrupts what is sound and healthy in the body, that it becomes by degrees incurable. When, therefore, the body is thus infected for a long time, there is no hope of a cure Life may indeed be prolonged, but not without continual languor. Now, as to spiritual diseases it is also true, that when putridity has pervaded the inward parts, it is impossible for any one to repent. And yet it must be observed, that we do not speak here of the power of God, but only shew, that all those who harden themselves in their vices, as far as their power is concerned, are incurable, and past all remedy. Yet God can deliver, even from the lowest depths, such as have a hundred times past all recovery. But here, as I have already said, the

[351] The word in Hebrew is “Cushite;” and many learned men contend that the “Ethiopian” is not meant, though all the early versions so render it except the Syriac, which has “Indian.” Blayney agrees with Bochart and others in thinking that the Cushites were the inhabitants of Arabia, on the borders of the Red Sea, and he refers in proof of this to 2 Chronicles 21:16. The skin is not said here to be black, but it was no doubt of a particular color, different from that of the Jews. — Ed.

[352] ”Panther,” {πάρδαλις} --- pardus, is the rendering of the Septuagint and the other versions. The word rendered ``spots,'' found only here, is translated ``varieties'' by the Septuagint and Vulgate, but ``spots'' by the Syriac and Targum. --- Ed.

Prophet does not refer to God's power, but only condemns his own nation, that they might not complain that God treated them with too much severity.

The meaning then is, that they ought not to have thought it strange that God left them no hope; for they became past recovery, through their own perverseness, as they could not adopt another course of life after having so long accustomed themselves to everything that was evil: Wilt thou also, he says, be able to do good? that is, wilt thou apply thy mind to what is just, who hast been accustomed to evil, or who hast hitherto learnt nothing but to do evil? [353] We now perceive the design of the Prophet --- that they unreasonably sought pardon of God, who had contracted such hardness by a long course of sinning that they were become incurable. It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 13:24

24 Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passeth away by the wind of the wilderness.

24 Et dispergam (vel, dissipabo) eos quasi stipulam transeuntem ad ventum deserti.

This is an inference which Jeremiah draws from the last verse. As long as there is any hope of repentance, there is also room for mercy; God often declares that he is long-suffering. Then the most wicked might object and say, that God is too rigid, because he waits not until they return to a sound mind. Now the Prophet had said that it was all over with the people: here therefore he meets the objection, and shews that extreme calamity was justly brought on them by God, because the Jews had obstinately hardened themselves in their vices and wickedness.

After having shewn, therefore, that corruption was inherent in them, as blackness in the skin of an Ethiopian, and as spots in panthers, he now comes to this conclusion --- I will scatter them as stubble which passes away by the wind of the desert This scattering denotes their exile; as though he had said, ``I will banish them, that they may know that they are deprived of the inheritance in which they place their safety and their happiness.'' For the Jews gloried in this only --- that they were God's people, because the Temple was built among them, and because they dwelt in the land promised to them. They then thought that God was in a manner tied to them, while they possessed that inheritance. Hence Jeremiah declares, that they would become like stubble carried away by the wind.

He mentions the wind of the desert, that is, the wind of the south, which was the most violent in that country. The south wind, as we know, was also pestilential; the air also was more disturbed by the south wind than by any other, for it raised storms and tempests. Therefore the Scripture, in setting forth any turbulent movement, often adopts this similitude. Some think that Jeremiah alludes to the Egyptians; but

[353] Neither this sentence nor the preceding is put interrogatively in the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Vulgate, but in this way, — "If the Ethiopian," etc.; "Even so can ye," etc. The Arabic and the Targum have both sentences in an interrogative form, and more consistently with the Hebrew. Blayney renders the first part interrogatively, as in our version, but not the second, and he gives a meaning to the second part which the original will not bear, and which is not countenanced by any of the versions. The most literal version is as follows, — Can the Cushite change his skin, Or the panther his spots? — Also ye, can ye do good, Who have learned evil? The future tense in Hebrew ought often to be rendered potentially, and sometimes subjunctively. — Ed.

I see no reason to seek out any refined explanation, when this mode of speaking is commonly adopted. Then by this similitude of south wind God intimates the great power of his vengeance; as though he had said, ``Even if the Jews think that they have a firm standing in the promised land, they are wholly deceived, for God will with irresistible force expel them.'' And he compares them to stubble, while yet they boasted that they were like trees planted in that land; and we have before seen that they had been planted as it were by the hand of God; but they wanted the living root of piety, they were therefore to be driven far away like stubble. [354]

Let us then learn from this passage not to abuse the patience of God: for though he may suspend for a time the punishment we deserve, yet when he sees that we go on in our wickedness, he will come to extreme measures, and will deal with us without mercy as those who are past remedy. It follows ---

Jeremiah 13:25

25. This is thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me, saith the LORD; because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood.

25. Haec sors tua, portio mensurarum tuarum a me, dicit Jehova; quia oblita es mei, et confisa in mendacio.

The Prophet no doubt wished to strip the Jews of their vain confidence, through which they acted arrogantly and presumptuously towards God, while yet they professed his name and claimed his favor. They said that they had obtained that land by an hereditary right, because it had been promised to their father Abraham. This indeed was true. They also said, that the land was God's rest; and they derived this from the prophets. They said farther that God was their heritage; and this also was true. But since they had wickedly profaned God's name, he takes from them these false boastings, and says, This is thy lot But still they said, When God divided the nations, his lot fell on Israel, for so says Moses. (Deuteronomy 32:8) As then they were wont to say, that God afterwards deceived them, the Prophet here on the other hand reminds them, that they foolishly confided in that lot, because God had rejected them, and did not acknowledge them now as his children, as they were become degenerate and perfidious. This, he says, is thy lot [355]

We see that there is to be understood here a contrast: God was the lot of the people, and they were also the lot of God, according to the passages to which we have referred. They were the heritage of God, and they boasted that God was their heritage; the land was a symbol and a pledge of this heritage. The Prophet now says: ``This lot shall be to thee the portion of thy measures from me.'' He alludes

[354] Our version begins with "therefore," giving this meaning to {,{ו vau, but Gataker considers this verse as connected with the 22d, and regards the 23d as parenthetic; and then he renders the vau ``and.'' The literal rendering of the latter part is, ``Passing to the wind of the desert,'' that is, the stubble which is exposed to that violent wind. The meaning may be thus given, --- And I will scatter them like the stubble That is subject to the wind of the desert. To pass over to a thing is to become within its range, or to its possession. The sense would be given by the following version, --- That is carried away by the wind of the desert. The meaning is not what the Septuagint give, ``carried by the wind to the desert;'' nor what the Vulgate presents, ``carried by the wind in the desert;'' but what is meant is, ``the wind of the desert,'' or, as Calvin says, the south wind. When the stubble was exposed to that, it is carried away with the greatest violence: such would be the scattering of the Jews. --- Ed.

[355] It may be thus rendered, — This thy lot is the share of thy measures From me, saith Jehovah. The "lot" was the scattering threatened in the previous verse. "The share of thy measures," is a Hebrew idiom for "a measured share," or "a measured portion," as rendered by Blayney. Some say that "measures" are mentioned, because the length and breadth were included. — Ed.

to an ancient custom; for they were wont to divide fields and meadows by lines, as they afterwards used poles; and we call such measures in the present day perches (perticas.)

We now then understand what the Prophet means; for he intimates that the Jews vainly and presumptuously and foolishly boasted, that God was their heritage; for he owned them not now as his children: and he also declares that another lot was prepared for them, far different from that of heritage, --- that God would banish them from the promised land, which they had polluted by their vices. Thus we see that we ought not presumptuously and falsely to pretend or profess the name of God; for though he has been pleased to choose us as his people, it is yet required of us to be faithful to him; and if we forsake him, the same reward for our impiety will no doubt await us as Jeremiah threatens here to his own nation. Let us then so use the favor of God and of Christ, and all the blessings which are offered to us by the gospel, that we may not have to fear that vengeance which happened to the Jews.

He adds the reason, Because thou hast forgotten me and trusted in falsehood [356] By falsehood the Prophet means not only the superstitions in which the Jews involved themselves, but also the false counsels which they adopted, when at one time they had recourse to the Egyptians, at another to some other ungodly nations, in order to get aids in opposition to the will of God. For wherever there was any danger, they thought they had a remedy at hand by having the favor and help of the Egyptians, or of the Assyrians, or of the Chaldeans. In the word falsehood, then, the Prophet includes those perverse designs which they formed, when they sought to defend themselves against God, who would have protected them by his power, had it not been necessary to punish them for their sins. What Jeremiah then condemned in the people was, that they placed their trust in falsehood, that is, that they souglint here and there vain helps, and at the same time disregarded God; nay, they thought themselves safer when God was displeased with them: and hence he says, Thou hast forgotten me For the Jews could not have sought deliverance from the Egyptians or from other heathen nations, or from their idols, without having first rejected God; for if this truth had been really fixed in their minds, --- that God cared for their safety, they would no doubt have been satisfied with his protection. Their ingratitude was therefore very manifest in thus adopting vain and impious hopes; for they thus dishonored God, and distrusted his power, as though he was not sufficient to preserve them. It now follows---

Jeremiah 13:26

26. Therefore will I discover thy skirts upon thy face, that thy shame may appear.

26. Et etiam ego nudabo, (vel, discooperiam) fimbrias tuas in faciem tuam (super faciem tuam,) et aspicietur ignominia tua (potest etiam in proeterito tempore exponi hic versus; sed quoniam vaticinium est, ideo non insisto curiose in verbis aut in syllabis, sed sensum duntaxat respicio; quamquam non male etiam conveniet, si vertamus in tempore proeterito, quasi propheta de re jam facta disserat.)

He continues the same subject, --- that God did not deal with his people with

[356] It is better to render {{אשר here ``because'' or for, according to all the versions and the Targum, than ``who,'' as by Blayney. --- Ed.

so much severity without the most just cause; for it could not be expected that he should treat them with more gentleness, since they rejected him and had recourse to vain confidences. I also, he says; for the particle {גם}, gam, denotes something mutual, as though he had said, ``I also will have my turn; for I have it in my power to avenge myself: I will retaliate,'' he seems to say, ``this thine ingratitude; for as thou hast despised me, so will I expose thee to reproach and shame.'' For God was shamefully despised by the Jews, when they substituted the Egyptians and their idols in his place: they could not have done him more dishonor than by transferring his glory to the ungodly and to their own figments. We hence see that there is an emphasis in the particle also, I will also make bare, or discover, thy skirts on thy face; that is, I will cast thy skirts on thy face. [357]

This mode of speaking often occurs in the Prophets; and as I have elsewhere explained, it means the uncovering of the uncomely parts: it is as though a vile woman was condemned to bear the disgrace of being stripped of her garments and exposed to the public, that all might abhor a spectacle so base and disgraceful. God, as we have before seen, assumed the character of a husband to his people: as then he had been so shamefully despised, he now says, that he had in readiness the punishment of casting the skirts of his people over their faces, that their reproach or baseness might appear by exposing their uncomely parts. It then follows ---

Jeremiah 13:27

27. I have seen thy adulteries, and thy neighings, the lewdness of thy whoredom, and thine abominations on the hills in the fields. Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?

27. Adulteria tua et hinnitus tuos, cogitationem scortationis tuae super montes in agro vidi, abominationes tuas: vae tibi Jerusalem; non mundaberis posthac? quousque adhuc?

Here the Prophet explains at large what I have before stated, --- that the people were justly punished by God, though very grievously, because they had provoked God, not at one time only, but for a long time, and had obstinately persisted in their evil courses. Moreover, as their sins were various, the Prophet does not mention them all here; for we have seen elsewhere, that they were not only given to superstitions, but also to whoredoms, drunkenness, plunders, and outrages; but here he only speaks of their superstitions, --- that having rejected God, they followed their own idols. For by adulteries he no doubt means idolatries; and he does not speak here of whoredom, which yet prevailed greatly among the people; but he only condemns them for having fallen away into ungodly and false forms of worship. To the same thing must be referred what follows, thy neighings; for by this comparison, we know, is set forth elsewhere, by way of reproach, that furious ardor with which the Jews followed their own inventions. The word indeed sometimes means exultation; for the verb {צהל}, tsel, is to exult; but here, as in Jeremiah 5 it signifies neighing.

[357] This is no doubt the meaning. See Nahum 3:5. The verb means to strip off, so as to make bare. The threatening is, to strip off the skirts and throw them over the face; and this is the rendering of the Syriac. Probably the most literal rendering would be the following, — And I also will strip (or roll) up thy skirts over thy face. The versions all differ, but the Septuagint convey this idea. Blayney's uncovering "thy skirts before thee," imparts no meaning. — Ed.

He then says, Thy adulteries and thy neighings, etc. Now this is far more shameful than if he had said thy lusts, for by this comparison we know their crime was enhanced, because they were not merely inflamed by a violent natural lust, such as adulterers feel towards strumpets, but they were like horses or bulls: Thy adulteries then and thy neighings; and he adds, the thought of thy whoredom, etc. The word {זמת}, zamet, is to be taken here for thought, and this is its proper meaning. It is indeed taken sometimes in a bad sense; but the Prophet, I have no doubt, meant here to wipe off a color with which the Jews painted themselves; for they said that they intended to worship God, while they accumulated rites which were not. prescribed in the law. The Prophet therefore condemns them here as being within full of unchastity, as though he had said, ``I do not only accuse you of open acts of wickedness, but ye burn also within with lust, for impiety has taken such hold on all your thoughts, that God has no place at all in you; ye are like an unchaste woman, who thinks of nothing but of her filthy lovers, and goes after her adulterers: ye are thus wholly given up to your whoredoms.

Some read the words by themselves and put them in the nominative case, *``Thy adulteries and thy neighings, and the thought of thy whoredom on the mountains;'' and then they add, ``In the field have I seen thine abominations.'' But I prefer to take the whole together, and thus to include all as being governed by the verb {ראיתי}, I have seen; ``Thy adulteries and thy neighings, the thought of thy whoredom on the mountains in the field have I seen, even* thy abominations.'' The last word is to be taken in apposition with the former words. But the Prophet introduces God here as the speaker, that the Jews might not seek evasions and excuse themselves. He therefore shews that God, whose proper office it is to examine and search the hearts of men, is the fit Judge. [358]

He mentions hills and field. Altars, we know, were then built on hills, for they thought that God would be better worshipped in groves; and hence there was no place, no wood, and even no tree, but that they imagined there was something divine in it. This is the reason why the Prophet says, that their abominations were seen by God on the hills as well as on the plains. And he adds fields, as though he had said, that the hills did not suffice them for their false worship, by which they profaned the true worship of God, but that the level fields were filled with their abominations.

We now then perceive the meaning of what is here said, that the Jews in vain tried to escape by evasions, since God declares that he had seen them; as though he had said, ``Cease to produce your excuses, for I will allow nothing of what ye may bring

[358] In all the versions, as well as in the Targum, the words in the beginning of this verse, as far as "whoredom," are read in apposition with "shame" in the preceding verse, and what follows as connected with the verb "I have seen," in this manner, — On hills in the field have I seen thy abominations. Another arrangement, suggested by Gataker, is more consonant with the Hebrew style, by considering the substantive verb to be understood in the first clause, as follows, — 27. Thy adulteries and thy neighings, The scheming of thy fornication, Have been on hills in the field; I have seen thine abominations. The word {,{זמת which I render ``scheming,'' is from a verb which means to devise, to contrive, to scheme, to plot. It is rendered ``wickedness'' by the Vulgate, ``alienation'' by the Septuagint, ``fornication'' by the Syriac, and ``design'' or counsel by the Targum. It never means ``lewdness.'' It seems to mean here the contrivances and devices formed by those given to fornication. Blayney considers it a verb in the second person: he connects the first line with the preceding verse, and renders thus what follows, --- Thou hast devised thy whoredom upon the hills, In the fields I have seen thine abominations. The simplicity of this order recommends it, but the former seems preferable. --- Ed.

forward, as the whole is already well known by me.'' And he declares their doings to be abominations, and also adulteries and neighings.

At length he adds, Woe to thee, Jerusalem! The Prophet here confirms what we have before observed, that the Jews had no just ground of complaint, for they had provoked God extremely. Hence the particle woe intimates that they were now justly given up to destruction. And then he says, Will they never repent? But this last part is variously explained; and I know not whether it can today be fully expounded. I will however briefly glance at the meaning.

Jerome seems to have read {אחרי}, achri, ``after me,'' ``Wilt thou not then return after me?'' as though God here intended to exhort the Jews to return at length to him, as he was ready to be reconciled to them. But as it is simply {אחרי}, achri, and he may have read without the points, I do not wish to depart from what is commonly received. There is further a difficulty in the words which follow, for interpreters vary as to the import of the words {עד} {מתי}, mati od, ``how long yet?'' In whatever sense we may take the words, they are sufficient to confute the opinion of Jerome, which I had forgotten to mention, because the malediction in that case would be improper and without meaning, ``Woe to thee, Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean after me?'' for what can this mean? It is therefore necessary so to read as to include all the words in the sentence, ``Wilt thou not hereafter or at length be made clean?'' Some, however, read the words affirmatively, ``Thou shalt not be cleansed hereafter,'' as though it was said, ``Thou shalt not be cleansed until I first drive thee into exile.'' But this meaning is too refined, as I think. I therefore take the words in their simple form, Wilt thou not at length be made clean? how long yet? as though God again reproved the hardness of the people, as indeed he did reprove it. Hence he says, ``Wilt thou not at length be made clean?'' for I take {אחרי}, achri, as meaning ``at length.'' Then follows an amplification, {מתיעד}, mati od, ``how long yet?'' [359] that is, ``Wilt thou never make an end? and can I not at length obtain this from thee, since I have so often exhorted thee, and since thou seest that I make no end of exhorting thee? how long yet shall thy obstinacy continue, so that I cannot subdue thee by my salutary admonitions?'' This is the meaning.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast once cleansed us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son, to the end that we might worship thee in true sincerity of heart, and that we might also strive to regulate our whole life according to the rule of righteousness, --- O grant that we, being mindful of our vocation, may labor to render ourselves approved by thee, so that thy name may through us be glorified, and that casting far away from us all pollutions, we may retain the simple worship of thee, and preserve ourselves within the limits of thy word, so that we may not be led astray after vanities and the sinful superstitions of this world, but advance towards the mark which thou hast been pleased to set before us, until we shall be at length gathered into that celestial kingdom in which we shall enjoy that inheritance which thine only-begotten Son has provided for us. --- Amen.

[359] The meaning seems to be right, but it is better to construe {,{אחרי ``after,'' with these words, --- Woe to thee, Jerusalem! thou wilt not be cleansed After what time wilt it yet be? Literally it may be rendered, ``After when yet?'' --- Ed.

Chapter 14

Lecture Fifty-Fifth

CHAPTER 14

Jeremiah 14:1

1. The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth.

1. Quod fuit verbum Jehovte ad Jeremiam super verbis prohibitionum.

Though the Prophet does not distinctly express that what had not yet happened was divinely revealed to him, yet it may be easily gathered that it was a prophecy with reference to what was future. Of this sterility nothing is recorded in sacred history: there is, however, no doubt but God had in an unusual manner afflicted the Jews, as previously in the days of Ahab. As then a drought was near at hand which would cause great scarcity, his purpose was to forewarn the Jews of it before the time, that they might know that the dryness did not happen by chance, but was an evidence of God's vengeance. And we know that whenever any adversity happens, the causes of it are sought in the world, so that hardly any one regards the hand of him who smites. But when there is a year of sterility, we consult astrology, and think that it is owing to the influence of the stars: thus God's judgment is overlooked. As then men contrive so many expedients by which they throw aside the consideration of Divine judgment, it was necessary that the Prophet should speak of the sterility mentioned here before it happened, and point it out as it were by the finger, though it was yet not made manifest.

He therefore says that the word of God came to him respecting the words of restraints [360] Though {דבר}, deber, signifies a thing or a business or concern, yet, what seems here to be intended is the contrast between {דבר}, deber, the word of

[360] The Septuagint express it in one word, "{ἀζροχία} --- the want of rain;" the Vulgate, by words of dryness, or drought: and the Syriac, by ``defect of rain.'' We may take ``words'' here in the sense of effects; so we may render the Hebrew, ``concerning the effects of restraints;'' and the last word is put in the plural number because there was a twofold restraint, --- that of the heavens from rain, and that of the earth from producing fruit. The ``effects'' of these restraints are described in the following verses. --- Ed

God, and {דברים} deberim, the words of men; for he says, {הבצרות} {דברי} {על} ol deberi ebetserut, because the Jews, as it is usual, would have many words of different kinds among themselves respecting the sterility: when anything uncommon or unexpected happens, every one has his own opinion. But the Prophet sets up the word of Jehovah in opposition to the words of men; as though he had said, ``They will inquire here and there as to the causes of the scarcity; there will yet be but one cause, and that is, God is punishing them for their wickedness.''

He calls sterility prohibitions or restraints: for though God could in an instant destroy and mar whatever has come to maturity, yet, in order to shew that all the elements are ready to obey him, he restrains the heavens whenever he pleases; and hence he says,

``In that day the heavens will hear the earth, and the earth will hear the corn, and the corn will hear men.'' (Hosea 2:21, 22)

For as this order of things is set before us, it cannot be otherwise but that, whenever we are hungry, our eyes turn to the corn and bread; but corn does not come except the earth be fruitful; and the earth cannot of itself bring forth anything, and except it derives moisture and strength from the heavens. So also, on the other hand, he says,

``I will make for you the heaven brass and the earth iron.'' [361] (Leviticus 26:19)

We hence see the reason for this word, prohibitions, by which the Prophet designates the dryness of the heavens and the sterility of the earth; for the earth in a manner opens to us its bowels when it brings forth food for our nourishment; and the heavens also pour forth rain, by which the earth is irrigated. So also God prohibits or restrains the heavens and the earth, and closes up his bounty, so as to prevent it to come to us. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 14:2-3

2. Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up.

2. Luxit Jehudab et portae ejus debilitatae sunt, (vel, dissipatae sunt;) obtenebrati sunt in terra (refernut quidam ad portas, sed malo ad homines referre;) et clamor Jerusalem ascendit.

3. And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads.

3. Et proceres coturn (hoc est, qui pollent dignitate) miserunt minores (hoc est, homines plebeios et mercenarios) ad aquas; venerunt ad cisternas, non invenerunt aquas; reversi sunt cum vasis inanibus (vel, reversa sunt vasa eorum vacua;) confusi sunt, et erubuerunt, et operuerunt caput suum.

The Prophet intimates in these words, that so great would be the scarcity as to appear to be a manifest and remarkable evidence of God's vengeance; for when God punishes us in a common way, we for the most part refer the event to some fortuitous circumstances, and the devil also ever retains our minds in the consideration of

[361] There is a little inadvertence here: “iron,” in this text, is applied to heaven, and “brass” to the earth, — Ed.

secondary causes. Hence the Prophet declares here that an event so unusual could not be ascribed to natural causes, as that the earth should become so sterile, but that; it was the extraordinary judgment of God. This is the reason wily he employs so many figurative expressions. He might indeed have said, in one sentence, that there would be in the land a most grievous famine; but hardly one in a hundred would have been moved by words so simply expressed. Therefore the Prophet, in order to arouse their stupor, uses terms the most forcible.

Hence he says, Mourned has Judah Though he speaks of what was future, yet, according to his own usual manner and that of others, he uses the past time in order to shew the certainty of what he said. He then declares that there would be mourning in Judah. He afterwards says, His gates have been weakened, or scattered. In mentioning gates, he takes a part for the whole, for he means the cities: but as judgments were wont to be administered at the gates, and as men often assembled there, he says that the gates would be reduced to solitude, so that hardly any one would appear there. He in the third place adds, They have become darkened to the ground, or, in plainer words, they became overwhelmed with grief; but the proper meaning of the word is to become darkened: and he says, to the ground, as though he said that they would be so cast down as to he in the dust, and would not dare to raise up their heads, nor would be able to do so, being worn down by want and famine. We hence see what he means, even this, --- that the scarcity would be so great that men would be down on the ground, and in a manner seek darkness for themselves, as it is the case with us when we flee as it were from the light and he on the ground; for we then shew that we cannot enjoy the light, it being disagreeable to us: and hence we see more clearly what I have stated, --- that the Prophet uses very strong terms to produce an impression on the Jews, that they might know that the earth was so sterile, not through any natural or common cause, but through the judgment of God. [362]

He afterwards adds, The cry of Jerusalem has ascended Here he sets forth their despair: for in doubtful matters we are wont to deliberate and to devise remedies; but when we are destitute of any counsel or advice, and when no hope appears, we then break out into crying. We hence see that it was an evidence of despair when the cry of Jerusalem ascended; for they would not be able to complain and to disburden their cares and griefs by pouring them into the bosoms of one another, but all of them would cry and howl.

It is then added, Their chiefs will send the common people to the waters The

[362] The versions connect the two verbs with gates: and if we take "gates" metonymically for those who attended them, the meaning will be evident. We may then render the verse thus, — Mourned hath Judah, And her gates, they have languished; Grieved have they for the land; And the cry of Jerusalem hath ascended. In the gates was the court of justice; there the chief men or governors assembled. The languishing belonged, not to the gates, but to those who attended them, and so the grief or lamentation. The first meaning of the verb is to be dark, to be black, but it is used to signify extreme grief or lamentation. See Psalms 35:14; 38:6; Jeremiah 8:21. As light denotes joy, so darkness is a symbol of grief or mourning. We use a similar kind of metonymy, when we say, "The court is in mourning." The Septuagint render the verse thus, — Mourned hath Judah, And her gates have been emptied, And have become dark for the land; And the shout of Jerusalem hath ascended. Blayney's version of the third line is as follows, — They are in deep mourning for the land. The Targum paraphrases the verb thus, — "Their faces are covered with blackness." — Ed.

Prophet's object was again to point out something extraordinary, --- that the great, possessing authority, would constrain and compel the common sort to draw water. They have sent them, he says, that is, by authority; they who could command others sent them to the waters. [363] They came, he says, to the cisterns By the word {גבים} gabim, he means deep ditches, or pits; but some render them cisterns. With regard to the subject in hand, it signifies not; for the Prophet no doubt meant that they would come to the deepest wells or pits, as it is usually done ia a great drought; for many springs become often dry, and pits also, situated in high places; but in valleys some water remains, and there it may be had: there are also some wells ever full of water, where its abundance never fails. It was therefore the Prophet's design to refer to such wells. They came, he says, to the wells, where they thought they could find a sufficient supply; but he adds, They found no waters; they returned with their empty vessels [364]

We now perceive what I have said, --- that the Prophet here reproves the Jews for their stupidity in not understanding that God was angry with them when the order of nature, which ought ever to continue the same, thus failed. Droughts indeed often happen when there are no waters in most places; but when no well supplies any water, when there is not a drop of water to be found in the most favorable places, then indeed it ought to be concluded that God's curse is on the people, who find nothing to drink; for in nothing does God deal more bountifully with the world than in the supply of water. We do not speak now of wine; but we see fountains everywhere pouring forth waters, and rivers also flow through countries: moreover, pits are dug through the labors of men; there are also cisterns in which the rain is preserved in places that are commonly dry: but when in cisterns no water remains, and when the fountains themselves refuse any supply, we may hence surely know that it is the special judgment of God; and this is what Jeremiah intended here to shew; and therefore he says that they were confounded and ashamed, and that they covered their head It now follows ---

Jeremiah 14:4

4. Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads.

4. Propter terram afflictam (contritam, vel, scissam; cum enim verbum hoc proprie significat conterere, non dubito, quin Propheta hic terram vel pulverulentam vel concisam signifcat,) quia non fuit pluvia in terra, confusi sunt agricolae (vel, pudefacti sunt, repetit illud verbum {בשו}) et cooperuerunt caput suum (etiam eandem

[363] The persons here mentioned are called by the Septuagint "chieftains — {μεγιστᾶνες},'' and ``young men --- {τους} {νεωτέρους};'' by the Vulqate, ``the elder ones --- majores,'' and ``the younger ones --- minores;'' by the Syriac, ``the chiefs,'' and ``the common sort;'' and by the Targum, ``chief men,'' and ``subjects.'' The first word is well expressed in our version, ``nobles,'' --- the illustrious; and the most suitable word for the others is ``menials;'' they were the servants. --- Ed

[364] would render the verse thus, — 3. When their nobles sent their menials for water, They came to the reservoirs, they found no water; They brought back their vessels empty: They were ashamed and confounded, And they covered their heads. The word I render "reservoirs" means literally arches or vaults. They were places arched over to preserve water. Parkhurst thinks that the reservoirs made by King Hezekiah are intended, 2 Chronicles 32:30. That the verb {{שב has the meaning of bringing back is evident from Isaiah 52:8; and this is according to the Vulgate and the Septuagint in this place. Gataker and Venema think that the shame and confusion refer to the nobles, and not to the servants. This verse speaks of Jerusalem, the last mentioned in the former verse; and what follows refers to Judea, spoken of in the former part according to the usual manner of the prophets. --- Ed

dictionem repetit.)

The Prophet had said, that though the whole common people were sent to the waters, yet none would be found. He now adds the same firing respecting the husbandmen. Ashamed, he says, shall be the husbandmen, for the ground shall be turned into dust, and God will pound it small. When the heavens supply moisture, the earth retains thus its solid character; but in a great heat we see the earth dissolving into dust, as though it was pounded in a mortar.

So he says, On account of the chapt ground, because there is no rain, ashamed shall be the husbandmen, and they shall cover their heads; for sorrow shall not only seize on them, but also fin them with such shame as to make them to shun the light and the sight of men. These things were intended for the same purpose, even to make the Jews to know that they were not by chance deprived of water, but because God had cursed their land, so that it yielded them no water even for the common wants of nature. It follows ---

Jeremiah 14:5-6

5. Yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there was no grass.

5. Quin etiam cerva in agro peperit et deseruit (nempe, foetum suum,) quia non fuit herba.

6. And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because there was no grass.

6. Et onagri steterunt super excelsa (diximus de hoc nomine, super labia, vel, eminentias, vel, rupes,) traxerunt (vel, hauserunt) ventum sicut serpentes; defecerunt oculi eorum, quia non fuit herba (utitur alio nomine, posuerat {דשא} prius, nunc ponit {עשב} sed eodem sensu.)

Jeremiah now comes to animals: he said before, that men would be visited with thirst, and then that the ground would become dry, so theft husbandmen would be ashamed; he now says that the wild asses and the hinds would become partakers of this scarcity. The hind, he says, has brought forth in the field, which was not usual; but he says that such would be the drought, that the hinds would come forth to the plains. The hinds, we know, wander in solitary places and there seek their food, and do not thus expose themselves; for they have a natural timidity, which keeps them from encountering danger. But he says that hinds, big with young, shall be constrained by famine to come to the fields and bring forth there, and then flee away: and yet they prefer their young to their own life. But the Prophet here shews that there would be something extraordinary in that vengeance of God, which was nigh the Jews, in order that they might know that the heavens and the earth and all the elements were armed against them by God, for they had so deserved. But he says, Bring forth shall the hind, and then he adds, and will forsake its young: but why will it bring forth in the field? even because it will not find grass in the mountains, and in the woods, and in the usual places.

The same thing is said of the wild asses, And the wild asses, he says, stood on the rocks: and yet this animal, we know, can endure want for a long Lime. But the Prophet, as I have said, intended to shew that there would be in this scarcity some

remarkable evidences of God's vengeance. Stood then did the wild asses on the rocks, and thence drew in wind like serpents: for great is the heat of serpents; on account of inward burning they are constrained to draw in wind to allay the heat within. The Prophet says, that wild asses were like serpents, for they were burning with long famine, so that they were seeking food in the wind itself, or by respiration. He then adds, Failed have their eyes, for there was no grass [365]

We now understand the object of this prediction: It was God's purpose not only to foretell the Jews what was soon to be, but also to point out, as it were, by the finger, his vengeance, that they might not have recourse, as usual, to secondary causes, but that they might know that they suffered punishment for their sins; for the scarcity would be so extraordinary as far to exceed what was usual. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 14:7

7. O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee.

7. Si iniquitates nostrae testificantur contra nos, Jehova, fac propter nomen tuum; quia multiplicatae sunt aversiones nostrae, in te scelerate egimus.

The Prophet, no doubt, intended here to exhort the Jews by his own example to seek pardon; nor does he so assume the character of others, as though he was free himself from guilt; for he was not more righteous than Daniel, who, as we find, testified that he confessed before God, not only the sins of the people, but also his own sins. (Daniel 9:4, 5) And Jeremiah, though not one of God's despisers, nor of the profane, who had provoked God's wrath, was yet one of the people; and here he connects himself with them; and he did this in sincerity and not in dissimulation. But he might have prayed silently at home; why then did he make public his prayer? What was his purpose in consigning it to writing? It was that he might rouse the people, as I have already said, by his example, so that they might flee as suppliants to God's mercy, and seek forgiveness for their sins. This then was the Prophet's object. Thus we see that the prophecy concerning the scarcity and the famine was announced, that the people might through repentance escape the wrath of God; for we know that when God has even taken his sword he may possibly be pacified, as he is in his nature merciful: and besides, the design of all such predictions is, that men, conscious of their sins, may by faith and repentance escape the destruction that awaits them. We now then understand the design of the Prophet in this passage.

He says first, Even though our iniquities testify, etc. The verb {ענה}, one, properly means to answer; but it means also to testify, as in this place. O Jehovah, [366] he says, there is no reason now to contend with thee, or to expostulate, or to ask why thou denlest so severely with us; let all such excuses be dismissed, for our sins

[365] The three foregoing verses I render as follows, — 4. On account of the ground being cracked, As there has been no rain in the land, Ashamed were the husbandmen, They covered their heads: 5. When also the hind was in the field, It brought forth young, and it was forsaken, Because there was no grass: 6. And the wild asses, they stood on the cliffs; They drew in the wind like serpents; Fail did their eyes, Because there was no herbage — Ed.

[366] All the versions connect "Jehovah" with the next words; and so do Veema, Gataker, and Blayney. The particle {{אם if, or though, is omitted by the Septuagint and the Arabic; but is retained by the Vulgate, Syriac, and the Targum. It may be rendered verily, or truly, --- Verily, our perversities, they have responded against us. The word {עון} means perverse or headstrong wickedness. There is an allusion in responding to a trial. ``They have stood against us,'' is the Septuagint. See Job 15:6. --- Ed.

testify against us; that is, ``Were there no angels nor men to accuse us, our own conscience is sufficient to condemn us.'' But when do our iniquities testify against us? Even when we know that we are exposed to God's judgment and are held guilty by him. As to the reprobate, their iniquities cry to heaven, as it is said of Sodom. (Genesis 18:20, 21) But the Prophet seems here to express something more, --- that the Jews could not make evasions, but must confess that they were worthy of death.

For he says, For thy name's sake deal with us. We see that the Prophet first condemns himself and the whole people; as though he had said, ``If thou, Lord, summonest us to plead our own cause, we can expect nothing better than to be condemned by our own mouths, for our iniquities are sufficient to condemn us. What then remains for us?'' The Prophet takes it as granted that there was but one remedy, --- that God would save his people for his own name's sake; as though he had said, ``In ourselves we find nothing but reasons for condemnation; seek then in thyself a reason for forgiving us: for as long as thou regardest us, thou must necessarily hate us and be thus a rigid Judge; cease then to seek anything in us or to call us to an account, but seek from thyself a reason for sparing us.'' He then adds, For multiplied have our defections, and against thee have we done wickedly [367] By these words the Prophet shews that he did not formally, like hypocrites, confess sins, but really acknowledged that the Jews would have been found in various ways guilty had God dealt with them according to justice.

As we now perceive the import of the words, let us learn from this passage, that there is no other way of being reconciled to God than by having him to be propitious to us for his name's sake. And by this truth is refuted everything that has been invented by the Papists, not less foolishly than rashly, respecting their own satisfactions. They indeed know that they stand in need of God's mercy; for no one is so blinded under the Papacy, who does not feel the secret misgivings of his own conscience: so the saintlings, who lay claim to angelic perfection, are yet self --- convicted, and are by necessity urged to seek pardon; but in the mean time they obtrude on God their satisfactions and works of supererogation, by which they compensate for their sins, and thus deliver themselves from the hand of God. Now this is a remarkable passage to confute such a diabolical delirium, for the Prophet brings forward the name of God; as though he had said, ``This is the only way by which we can return to God's favor and obtain reconciliation with him, even by having him to deal with us for his name's sake, so that he may seek the cause of his mercy in himself, for in us he can find none.'' If Jeremiah said this of himself, and not feignedly, what madness is it for us to arrogate so much to ourselves, as to bring anything before God by which he may be induced to shew mercy? Let us then know that God forgives our sins, not from a regard to any compensation, but only on account of a sufficient reason within himself, that he may glorify his own name. Now follows a clearer explanation and a confirmation of this verse.

Jeremiah 14:8-9

8. O the hope ot: Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou

[367] The latter part may be thus rendered, — Jehovah! deal with us for thy name's sake: For many have been our defections, Against thee have we sinned. The Syriac renders fitly the first line, — O Lord, spare us on account of thy name. — Ed.

be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?

8. Spes Israel (vel, expectatio; {קוה} est expectare,) servator ejus in tempore angustiae (vel, tribulationis,) cur eris quasi peregrinus in terra? quasi viator divertens ad pernoctandum?

9. Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O LORD, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.

9. Quare eris vir territus? quasi gigas qui non potest servare? atqui (copula enim valet hic adversativum) tu in medio nostri Jehova, et nomen tuum super nos invocatum est, ne deseras nos.

I have said that the former verse is confirmed by these words; for since the Prophet mentions to God his own name, we must consider the cause of the confidence with which he was supported, which was even this, --- because God had chosen that people, and promised that they should be to him a peculiar people. It is then on the ground of that covenant that the Prophet now prays God to glorify his name; such a prayer could not have been made for heathen nations. We hence perceive how the Prophet dared so to introduce God's name, as to say, Deal with us for thy name's sake

He calls God, in the next place, the hope of Israel; not that the Israelites relied on him as they ought to have done, for the ten tribes had long before revolted from him, and so great a corruption had also prevailed in Judah, that hardly one in a thousand could be deemed faithful. Hope then among the people had become extinct; but the Prophet here regards the perpetuity of the covenant, as though he had said, ``Even though we are unworthy to be protected by thee, yet as thou hast promised to be always ready to bring us help, thou art our hope. In short, the word hope or expectation, is to be referred to God's promise, and to the constancy of his faithfulness, and not to the faithfulness of men, which did not exist, at least it was very small and in very few.

To the same purpose he adds, His Savior in time of trouble He had in view the many proofs by which God had manifested his power in the preservation of the faithful. And he expressly mentions trouble or distress, as though he had said, that the aid of God had been known by evidences sufficiently clear; for had the people never wanted his help, his favor would have been less evident; but as they had been often reduced to great straits, the bounty and the power of God had become more manifest by delivering them from extreme dangers.

It is then added, Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land? as a traveler, who turns aside for a short time in his journey to pass the night? Here must be noticed a contrast between a stranger and one that is stationary, spoken of afterwards. God would have his name to be invoked in Judea; it was therefore necessary that his favor should continue there; and hence he called the land his rest, and he had also promised by Moses that he would ever be in the midst of his people. The Prophet no doubt had taken from the law what he relates here, Thou art in the midst of us, Jehovah, thy name is called on us He therefore reasons from what seemed inconsis-

tent, that he might obtain pardon from God; for if he was inexorable, his covenant would have failed and perished, which would have been unreasonable, and could not indeed have been possible. Hence he says, ``Lord, why shouldest thou be as a stranger and as a traveler, who seeks only a lodging for one night, and then goes forward?'' God had promised, as I have already said, that he would rest perpetually in the land, that he would be a God to the people; it, was not then consistent with the covenant that God should pass as a stranger through the land. As he had then formerly defended the Jews, and made them safe and secure even in the greatest dangers, so the Prophet now says, that it was right that he should he consistent with himself and continue ever the same.

As to the words which follow, Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished or terrified? I take ``terrified'' for an uncultivated person, as we say in our language, homme savage [368] It is then added, As a giant who cannot save; that is, a strong helper, but of no skin, who possesses great strength, but fails, because he is rendered useless by his own bulk. And so the Prophet says, that it would be a strange thing, that God should be as a strong man, anxious to bring help and yet should do nothing.

After having said these things, he subjoins the contrast to which I have referred, But thou art in the midst of us, Jehovah, thy name is called on us, forsake us not We now see that the Prophet dismisses all other reasons and betakes himself to God's gratuitous covenant only, and recumbs on his mercy. Thou art, he says, in the midst of us God had bound himself by his own compact, for no one else could have bound him. Then he says, Thy name is called on us Could the people boast of anything of their own in being thus called? By no means; but that they were so called depended on a gratuitous covenant. As then the Prophet did cast away every merit in works, and every trust in satisfactions, there remained nothing for him but the promise of God, which was itself founded on the free good pleasure of God. Let us hence learn, whenever we pray to God, not to bring forward our own satisfactions, which are nothing but filthy things, abominable to God, but to allege only his own name and promise, even the covenant, which he has made with us in his only --- begotten Son, and confirmed by his blood.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since we are taught by the Teacher whom thou hast set over us, to seek our daily bread from thee, we may know that whenever thou chastisest us with scarcity, we are justly visited by thy hand; and shouldest thou at any time deal severely with us, may we never cease to implore thy mercy, and feel assured that thou wilt ever be merciful and propitious to us, provided we decline not from the way which thou hast pointed out to us, even that thy Son will reconcile us

[368] The word {,{נדהם rendered ``astonished,'' is only found here; it is evidently a Niphal participle, and rendered, by the Septuagint ``sleeping --- {ὑπνῶ},'' --- by the Vulgate, ``wandering --- vagus,'' --- by the Siyriac, ``weak --- imbecillis,'' --- by Montanus and Paginius, ``astonished.'' Parkhurst, after Grotius, derives it from an Arabic verb, which means to ``come upon one unexpectedly,'' or to overwhelm, and renders it overwhelmed, astonied. It may then be rendered, surprised. Grotius says, that it means a precipitant person, coming to the aid of one in danger, and not capable of delivering him. As in the former instance, ``the sojourner'' and ``the traveler'' are the same, only what is said of the latter is more specific; so it seems to be here: the man, taken by surprise, is only farther described as one who is not able on that account to save. The two verses may be thus rendered --- 8. The hope of Israel! his Savior in time of distress! Why art thou like a sojourner in the land? Or like a traveler turning aside to pass the night? 9. Why art thou like one taken by surprise --- Like a man who is not able to save? Yet thou art in the midst of us, Jehovah; And thy name, on us is it called: Do not forsake us --- Ed.

to thee, and that his blood is our only satisfaction; and may we not look to anything else, even in seeing our salvation, but that thy name may be more and more glorified through Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifty-Sixth

Jeremiah 14:10

10. Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins.

10. Sic dicit Jehovah.ad populum hunc (vel, de populo hoc; {ל} utrunque significat,) Sicut dilexerunt ad va gandum (hoc est, sicut amarunt vagari,) pedes suos non cohibuerunt, ideo Jehova non placuit sibi in illis; nunc recordabitur iniquitatum eorum, et visitabit peccata ipsorum.

The Prophet goes on with the same subject; but he reproves the Jews more severely and shews what their sins were. He says then that they were given to inconstancy; but by saying, ``to wander,'' {לנוע} lenuo, which means to move here and there, he no doubt mentions this inconstancy as a contrast to that quiemess and rest, of which Isaiah speaks, when he says,

``Behold the Lord hath commanded, In returning and in confidence shall be your strength, in quietness and tranquillity.''

(Isaiah 30:15)

He then wished the Jews to adopt different counsels, and not to run here and there when any danger was at hand, but to wait until he, according to his promise, came to their aid. Hence Jeremiah now accuses them of inconstancy, because they would not rely on God's help and remain firm in their purpose, but run here and there for vain helps; besides a diabolical frenzy led them after idols, as Isaiah says in another place,

``Thou hast wearied thyself in thy ways and without profit,''

(Isaiah 47:13)

This fact is often mentioned by the prophets, --- that they were like roving strumpets who seek paramours everywhere; for their confederacies with the Egyptians and the Chaldeans cost them much, and yet they spared no expenses. They might have waited quietly for the aid of God, which had been promised; but they did not.

We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet when he says, that they loved to wander, [369] or to move here and there, and that they restrained not their feet At the first view, indeed, this seems to have been but a small offense; but if we consider its source, that they distrusted God and his power, and placed their safety in the Egyptians, or the Chaldeans, it will appear to have been a shameful and an intolerable sacrilege. Unbelief, then, is here condemned; for the Jews looked around for foreign aids, and made no account of God.

Now this passage, is worthy of being especially noticed, for unbelief is here

[369] The {{כן so, before ``loved,'' is not well accounted for, nor is it given in any of the versions. The previous complaint was that God was like a ``traveler'' in the land, who made no stay: the answer given is, ``so have ye been; ye have loved to wander here and there.'' It is an ironical retort. The verse may be thus rendered, --- Thus saith Jehovah of this people, --- ``So have they loved to wander, Their feet have they not restrained.'' And Jehovah has not been pleased with them; He will now remember their iniquity, And he will visit their sin. --- Ed.

painted to the life. It is indeed true that even the children of God are not so tranquil in their minds that they never fear, that they are never solicitous or anxious, that they dread no danger; but yet, though the faithful are disturbed by many inquietudes, cares, anxieties, and fears, still God ever preserves them; and the firmness of their faith within continues, though it may happen that they are apparently not only shaken, but even stagger and fall. But God gives to the unbelieving their just reward, who derogate from his power, while they place their safety on men or on idols, for they never find where they may safely stand. They therefore weary themselves without any advantage. On this account he says, Therefore Jehovah will not be pleased with them, that is, God will not give them courage: nay, he says, he will now remember their iniquities and visit their sins In short, he teaches us, that so grievous was the wickedness of that people, that there was no place for the mercy of God. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 14:11-12

11. Then said the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for their good.

11. Et dixit mihi Jehovah, Ne ores in gratiam populi hujus in bonum, (hoc est, ut benefaciam.)

12. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.

12. Quum jejunaverint, ego non exaudiam ad clamorem eorum, et quum obtulerint sacrificium et oblationem, ego non habebo gratum (idem est verbum, in illis non placebit mihi, non placabor, non ero propitius;) quoniam in gladio, in fame, et peste ego consumam eos.

God first forbids the Prophet to pray for the people, as we have before seen, (Jeremiah 7:16; Jeremiah 11:14) But we must remember what I have said before, that this prohibition is to be understood as to their exile; for as God had already decreed that the people should be banished from the promised land, the Prophet was forbidden to pray, inasmuch as that decree was immutable. It is not, therefore, a general prohibition, as though the Prophet was not allowed to ask God's forgiveness in behalf of the whole people, or at least in behalf of the godly who still remained. The Prophet might indeed pray in a certain way for the whole people, that is, that God, being satisfied with their temporal punishment, would at length spare the miserable with regard to eternal life: he might have also prayed for the remnant; for he knew that there was some seed remaining, though hidden; nay, he was himself one of the people, and he not only knew that some true servants of God were still remaining, but he had also some friends of his own, whose piety was sufficiently known to him. God, therefore, did not strictly exclude all his prayers, but every prayer with regard to the exile which was soon to be undergone by the people.

Except we bear in mind this.circumstance, the prohibition might seem strange; for we know that it is one of the first duties of love to be solicitous for one another before God, and thus to pray for the wellbeing of our brethren. (James 5:16) It is not then the purpose of God to deprive the Prophet of this holy and praiseworthy feeling, which is necessarily connected with true religion; but his design was to shew, that it

was now in vain to implore him for the remission of that punishment which had been determined.

We hence see first, that under the name of people every individual was not included, for some seed remained; and we farther see that this prohibition extended not to eternal life, but on the contrary to temporal punishment. And the demonstrative pronoun this indicates contempt or disdain, as though he had said, ``What! why shouldest thou pray for a people wholly unworthy of mercy; let them perish as they deserve.'' So when he says, for good --- {לטובה} lethube, it ought also to be referred to their exile, by which he intimates, ``Hope not that what has been once fixed by me respecting this people can be changed by any prayers; they must therefore suffer the punishment which they have deserved, for I will banish them from the land.''

He afterwards adds, Even when they fast, I will not hear their cry, and when they present a sacrifice and an oblation, I will not be pleased with them He doubtless touches the hypocrites, who, though void of all sincerity, yet professed to be the true worshippers of God, and by sacrifices and fastings and other external rites wished to prove themselves to be so. He therefore says that he would not be propitious or appeasable, though they fasted, and prayed, and offered all kinds of sacrifices. The words, as I have said, were especially addressed to hypocrites; for we know that that declaration remains unchangeablesthat God is nigh to all those who call on him in sincerity. (Psalm 145:18) Whosoever, then, calls on God with a true heart, infallibly obtains his favor; for in another place it is ascribed to God as a thing necessarily belonging to him, that he hears prayers. Whenever then God is invoked, he cannot divest himself of what essentially appertains to himshis readiness to hear prayer. But here he intimates that there was no sincerity in the people; for even when they fasted and prayed, and offered sacrifices, they did not truly worship him; for, as it was said before, they could no more put off the wickedness which adhered to their marrow than the Ethiopian could change his skin or the panther his spots, (Jeremiah 13:23) He then shews, in this place, that though they wearied themselves, in pacifying God by an external profession, they did nothing but act falsely, and that therefore their efforts would be all in vain; for they profaned the name of God when they thus grossly dissembled with him. This is the meaning.

Fasting is expressly mentioned, and it hence appears, that when there is nothing wanting as to outward appearance, God still ever regards faith, as we have seen in the fifth chapter. Hence God values not what is highly esteemed by men, and excites their feelings: why? because he regards the faith of the heart, and faith is taken for integrity. So then God abominates a double and a false heart; and the greater the fervor hypocrites display in external rites, the more they provoke him.

We pray to God daily, it may be said, and yet we do not fast daily. It is indeed true that prayer is more intent when we fast; but yet God requires not daily fastings, while he enjoins prayer both in the morning and in the evening, yea, he would have us to implore his grace continually. (1 Thessalonians 5:17) But when fasting is joined to prayer, then prayer becomes more earnest; as it is usually the case when there is any danger, or when there appears any evidence of God's wrath, or when we labor under any heavy affliction; for we then not only pray but we also fast that we may

be more free and more at liberty to pray. Besides, fasting is also an evidence that we are deprecating the wrath of God, while we confess that we are guilty before him; and thus also they who pray stimulate themselves the more to sorrow and to other penitential feelings. It is therefore the same as though he had said, ``Even if they pray in no common manner and every day, and add fasting, so that greater fervor may appear in their prayers and extraordinary attention, yet I will not hear their cries, even because their heart is false.''

We further gather from this passage that fasting is not in itself a religious duty or exercise, but that it refers to another end. Except then they who fast have a regard to what is thereby intended --- that there may be a greater alacrity in Prayer --- that it may be an evidence of humility in confessing their sins --- and that they may also strive to subdue all their lusts --- except these things be regarded, fasting becomes a frivolous exercise, nay, a profanation of God's worship, it being only superstitious. We hence see that fastings are not only without benefit except when prayers are added, and those objects which I have stated are regarded, but that they provoke the wrath of God as all superstitions do, for his worship is polluted.

But under the Papacy the reason given for fastings is, that they merit the favor of God. The Papists seek to pacify him by fasting as by a sort of satisfaction; they will have fasting to be a work of merit. I will not now speak of the numberless trifles which also pollute their fasting; but let us suppose that they are not superstitious in their choice of meats, in their hours, and in other childish follies, which are mere trumperies, nay, mockeries also to God --- let us suppose them to be free from all these vices, yet the intention, as they call it, is nothing else but a diabolical error, for they determine that fasting is a work of merit and of satisfaction, and a kind of expiation. Let us then know, that though Jeremiah speaks of hypocrites, yet he briefly points out the design of fasting by mentioning prayer. So also Christ, when recommending fasting, makes mention of prayer. (Matthew 17:21; Mark 9:29) The same is done by Paul. (1 Corinthians 7:5.) But it ought to be noticed here, that though hypocrites joined before men prayer with fasting, they were yet rejected, for there was no sincerity in their hearts, but only an outward profession, a mere disguise. But God, as we have, seen, regards the heart, and sincerity alone pleases him.

The same thing is said of sacrificing, When they present sacrifices, or burnt --- offerings, and an oblation, {מנחה}, meneche, that is, the daily offerings, I will not hear them, or, as he says in the second clause, I will not be pleased with them Sacrifice without prayers were no doubt vain and worthless, for as pr ayers were not acceptable to God without a sacrifice, so when sacrifice was without prayers it was only a vain shew these two things are then united as by an indissoluble knot, to offer sacrifices and to pray. Prayers, as I have said, cannot be acceptable to God without a sacrifice; for what can proceed from mortal man but what is abominable before God? Our prayers must therefore be sanctified in order that they please God; and the only way of sanctification is through the sacrifice of Christ. When they offered sacrifices under the law they also joined prayers; and by this ceremony they who made any request professed themselves unworthy except a sacrifice was offered. The Prophet

then mentions here what God had commanded under the law, but he shews that hypocrites separated the principal thing from the external signs. God indeed neither disregards nor rejects signs, but when what they signify is separated from them, there is then an intolerable profanation. Let us then know, that though nothing may be wanting in the external worship, yet whatever we seek to do is abominable to God except it be accompanied with sincerity of heart.

But I will consume them, [370] he says, with the sword, and with famine, and with pestilence I render the particle {כי} ki, ``but.'' He refers here to three modes of destruction, that the Jews might surely know that they were to perish, according to what is said elsewhere, ``He who escapes from the sword shall perish by the famine, and he who survives the famine shall perish by the pestilence.'' God shews, in short, that he was armed with various kinds of punishment, so that they who had so provoked him as wholly to lose the hope of pardon, could by no escapes deliver themselves from destruction. God might indeed have consumed the Jews by one punishment, he might have also threatened them in general terms without specifying anything, but as the unbelieving ever promise themselves some way of escape, so his purpose was to hold them bound in every way, that they might know that they were shut up on every side, and that no way of escape could be found. This is the meaning. It follows ---

Jeremiah 14:13

13. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place.

13. Et dixi, O, ho, Domine Jehovah; ecce prophetae dicunt illis, Non videbitis gladium, et fames non erit vobis; quoniam pacem veritatis (id est, stabilem) dabo vobis in hoc loco.

The Prophet no doubt relates what he had expressed in prayer to God; but yet he has a reference to the people. He then prayed in the manner he now relates; but he renders public the prayers he offered by himself and without a witness, in order that he might restore the Jews from their impiety. Now Jeremiah's colloquy with God availed not a little to touch the Jews; for as though they themselves had been present, he set before them what he had heard from God's mouth. We now then understand why he made known his secret prayers; it was not for the sake of boasting, but for the sake of doing good to the Jews. It was then his object to consult their benefit, when he declared to them what he had previously poured forth without any witness into the bosom of his God.

And I said, Ah, Lord Jehovah! He uses an expression of grief, Ah! and thus he shews what concern he felt for his people, being not less anxious on account of their ruin than on account of his own. It may yet be an expression of astonishment, as though the Prophet was fined with surprise, ``What can this be, O Lord?'' And doubtless an expression of astonishment is not unsuitable, so that the Jews might feel horrified together with him, when they saw that they had been led astray by the

[370] As it is a participle in Hiphil, preceded by a pronoun, it ought to be rendered causatively, — But with the sword, and with famine, and with pestilence, Will I cause them to be condemned. — Ed.

false prophecies, by which they had been deceived. He then says, ``How is this, O Lord? for the prophets say to them, etc. [371]

Here the word, prophets, is emphatic, as though he had said, They are not thus mad wilfully in promising to themselves peace, contrary to thy will, but these prophets who profess and boast of thy name, these are the authors of this so gross a security; for they say, Ye shall not see the sword, famine shall not happen to you; nay, I will give you, etc. Here they assume the person of God; for it is not said, ``God shall give you sure peace,'' but ``I will give you,'' etc. We hence see that the Prophet here expresses his horror, while he compares false prophecies with the oracle which he had received from the mouth of God. The prophets, he declares, say, etc. They assumed an honorable title, and one connected with the power and authority of God himself. ``Even the prophets then, who seem endued with the authority of heaven, and seem to have been sent by thee, as though they were angels, --- even these promise men peace, not in a common manner, but in a way the most imposing, as though they had thine authority, and brought from thy mouth their fallacies, I will give you.''

We now then understand the design of the Prophet; for it was necessary to shake off from the Jews that false confidence, by which the false prophets, who pretended to have been sent from above, and boasted that they were God's servants, the agents of the Holy Spirit, had inebriated them. As then it was necessary to take away from the Jews this confidence, the cause of their ruin, because they hardened themselves in contempt of God, and despised all his threatenings; he therefore says, ``What! the false prophets speak thus, I will give you sure peace [372] in this place.''

We hence learn that Jeremiah had almost a continual contest; for the fiercest antagonists immediately presented themselves, whenever he threatened the people either with exile or with famine, or with any other judgment of God. ``What! be secure, for God has chosen this place where he is worshipped. It cannot be that he will banish his Church from its quiet rest. There is no reason then to fear that he will ever suffer this kingdom to perish or his Temple to be destroyed.'' Hence the complaint of the Prophet, not that he himself was affected by such falsehoods, but he regarded the good of the people, and sought to recover those who were as yet healable from these deceptions. Hence it follows ---

Jeremiah 14:14

14. Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

14. Et dixit Jehova mihi, Mendacium prophetae prophetant in nomine meo; non misi eos, et non praecepi illis, et non loquutus sum cum illis: visionem mendacii (hoc est, mendacem) et divinationem et vanitatem (vel, rem nihili) et fraudem cordis sui

[371] "Alas!" is commonly the meaning of this exclamation, being an expression of grief rather than of astonishment. "Ah!" is the Vulgate, — "Oh!" the Septuagint. It is rendered "Alas!" by Blayney. — Ed.

[372] Or, "constant peace — pacem firmam." It rather means "true or real peace," literally, "the peace of truth." The version of the Septuagint is "truth and peace," — of the Vulate and Targum, "true peace," and of the Syriac, "peace and security." — Ed.

ipsi prophetant vobis.

We now see more clearly why the Prophet related his own complaint, and also his astonishment, of which God alone had been the witness, and that was, that the people might be more attentive to his warning. For had he only said, ``The prophets deceive you, and God would have this to be made known to you,'' his address would not have been so powerful, as when this question precedes, ``Lord God, what is this? the prophets promise peace to this people, and forbid them to fear pestilence and war.'' As then the Prophet had set forth this according to his own view and the common view of the whole people, the answer, as I have said, becomes more forcible, and more easily penetrates into the mind. God then gives this answer, Falsehood do the prophets prophesy in my name

In my name, is emphatical; for God reminds us, that we ought to beware of every appearance of falsehood, that we ought not easily and rashly, and without discrimination, to believe all prophecies; for not everything boasted of as being divine is really so. We then see that this is a remarkable passage; for God reminds us, that we ought to exercise judgment as to prophecies, so that we may not be inconsiderately led away by anything brought forward under the pretext of his name. He would have us therefore wisely to distinguish between things; and hence I have said that this passage deserves to be specially noticed the Papists at this day vainly boast of their titles, and say that they are the real Church, that they are the pastors, and that the Church of God is the pinar of the truth; and thus they astonish and confound the simple, so that every discrimination is taken away, and whatever it pleases them to determine is to be received as an oracle. But God shews here, by the mouth of Jeremiah, that we are not rashly to believe every kind of prophecy. In my name, he says, the prophets prophesy, as though he had said, ``My name is often impiously profaned by men. As then there are many who pass themselves as my servants and prophets, and who also occupy a place of dignity and exercise the ordinary office, yea, as there is such depravity in men, that they are not ashamed to abuse my name, wisdom and discretion ought to be exercised.'' This is the first thing; for God intimates, that it is not enough for men to claim the prophetic office, except they also prove that they are true and faithful prophets.

He afterwards adds, I have not sent them, nor have I commanded them, neither have I spoken to them; a vision of falsehood, etc He here takes away authority from the false prophets; for he had not sent them, nor commanded them to speak, nor spoken to them. The latter clause is more general than the rest: but these three things ought to be carefully noticed, for they serve to distinguish true from false prophets. It was then God's purpose to mention here certain marks by which the difference between true and false prophets may be known.

He says first, that they were not sent, for they obtruded themselves. Hence a call is necessary, for God would not have disorder and confusion in his ChurJeremiah It is indeed true that the call of Jeremiah was extraordinary; for when the state of the Church was rightly formed, the chief priest was the teacher of religion and true doctrine, who was now the adversary of God's faithful servant. There were indeed some, like Amos, who were taken from the common people; yet there were none

more fit for the prophetic office than the priests, for they were, as Malachi says, the messengers of the God of hosts. (Malachi 2:4, 7) But when they became degenerate, God, in order to reproach them, raised up other prophets from obscure vinages and from the common people. It was then sometimes an interior call only; but when the Church was duly formed, a regular outward call was also necessary. However this may have been, it is certain that such as were not called by God, falsely and wickedly pretended to have his authority, being both without the outward call and without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is the first thing.

It then follows, I have not commanded them Here is the second mark of distinction; for God testifies that no credit is due to the prophets, except as far as they faithfully deliver, as it were from hand to hand, what has been committed to them. If then a prophet mingles anything of his own, he is proved to be false and is not worthy of any credit. Let us hence know, that prophets are not endued with any other power, but to deliver faithfully what has been committed to them from above.

But the third mark, which is added, is still more clear: God says, that he had not spoken to them; for he thus intimates that no voice but his ought to be heard in the ChurJeremiah Why then does he bid honor and reverence to be payed to his prophets? Even because they bring nothing but what he has delivered. We hence see how God allows men no power of their own to rule in his Church; but he will have obedience to be rendered to himself, so that their duty is faithfully to declare what he has committed to them. Therefore as to the command, it refers to what was particular; but when he says, I have not spoken to them, what was general is intended; it is the same as though he had said, that it was not lawful nor right for prophets and teachers to bring forward anything but what they had received from heaven.

Hence he concludes, that they spoke falsehood and impostures, and divination and vanity, and the deceit of their own heart. [373] We hence see that as soon as men depart even in the smallest degree from God's word, they cannot preach anything but falsehoods, wmities, impostures, errors, and deceits: and all who thoughtlessly give credit to men, without considering whether they have been sent by God, and faithfully deliver what he has committed to them, wilfully perish. But on this subject

[373] I render the verse as follows, — 14. And Jehovah said to me, — Falsehood do the prophets prophesy in my name; I have not sent them, nor given them a command, Nor have I spoken to them: A vision of the fidsehood and divination, And vanity and delusion of their own heart, Do these of themselves prophesy to you. God had not sent them, the final act; he had given them no command or commission, the preceding act; he had not spoken to them, the first act. God first speaks, then gives a commission, and afterwards sends forth his servants. The vision the false prophets had was that of the falsehood of their own heart, of the divination, of the vanity, and of the delusion of their own heart. Such seems to be the meaning given by the Septuagint and the Vulgate. It was the lying vision of their own heart, it was the divination or the presage, the vanity, and the delusion of their own heart. The word for "prophesy" in the last line is in Hitthpael; and hence "of themselves" is added. Blayney gives a different view; his version is, — A false vision, and divination, and vanity, And the guile of their own heart, do these prophesy unto you. He considers "a false vision" to be an imaginary revelation; "divination," to be something discovered by that art; "vanity," to be the oracular response of an idol; and "guile," to be the fraudulent suggestion of their own heart. But the simplest exposition is what I have stated: The vision, being that of their own heart, was false; it was their own divination or prognostication; it was worthless, vain, and empty; it was the effect of their own delusion. This was the character of what they prophesied. We may render the words thus, — The false vision and the divination And the vanity and the delusion of their own heart, Do these of themselves prophesy to you. — Ed.

more shall be said.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou dealest so kindly with us as daily to shew to us our sins and to exhort us to repent, and teachest us that thou art ready to give us forgiveness, --- O grant, that we may not be of a refractory mind, nor flee away from thee, while thou so kindly invitest us to thyself, but learn seasonably to repent, and be touched with the fear of thy judgment, so that we may truly and from the heart seek that reconciliation, which has been procured for us by the blood of thine only --- begotten Son; and as we can bring nothing of our own, may we submissively humble ourselves before thee, and also by faith embrace the gift of thine only --- begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifty-Seventh

Jeremiah 14:15-16

15. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed.

15. Propterea sic dicit Jehova super prophetas, qui prophetant in nomine meo, et ego non misi eos, et dicunt, Gladius et fames non erit in terra hac; in gladio et fame consumentur prophetae illi:

16. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them.

16. Et populo cui ipsi prophetarunt (illis, est supervacuum) erunt projecti in compitis Jerusalem a facie famis et gladii (hoc est, coram fame et gladio vel praelio) et non erit qui sepeliat eos, ipsi, uxores eorum, et filii eorum, et filiae eorum, et effundam super eos malum ipsorum.

Jeremiah, after having declared to the false prophets, that as they had by their flatteries deceived the people, they would have to suffer the punishment they had deserved, turns now his address to the people themselves. God might, however, have seemed to deal with them rather hardly, that he inflicted so severe a punishment on men who had been deceived; but the answer to this is evident; for it is certain that except the world winingly sought falsehoods, the power of the devil to deceive would not be so great. When men therefore are led astray by impostures, it happens through their own fault, inasmuch as they are more ready to embrace vanity than to submit to God and his word. And we must remember that saying of Paul, that all the reprobate are blinded and given up to a reprobate mind, because they wilfully seek falsehood, and will not obey the truth. (Romans 1:28) And on this account God declares that he tries the hearts of men, whenever false prophets come abroad; for every one who really fears God shall by no means be led away by the deceits of Satan and of impostors. Hence, whenever men are too credulous and readily embrace deceptions, it is certain that their hypocrisy is thus justly punished by God. And it was well known to the Prophet, that the Jews ever wished for such prophets as soothed their ears and promised them an abundant harvest and a fruit-

ful vintage. (Micah 2:11) As then they had itching ears, a liberty was justly given to Satan to deluge the whole land with falsehood; and so indeed it happened. There is then no wonder that the Lord was so severe in chastising the people; for they had not been deceived except through their own fault. The same thing happens at this day. Though we are touched with pity when we see the ministers of Satan prevail in deceiving the common people: yet we must remember that a reward is rendered by heaven for the impiety of men, who either extinguish or smother the light of God as much as they can, and seek to plunge into darkness.

This then was the reason why God so severely visited the Jews, who had been deceived by false teachers: it was owing to their previous impiety and ingratitude. And on this account also he adds at the end of the verse, I will pour forth upon them their wickedness Some think that the word {רעה}, roe, may denote punishment as well as wickedness, as {עון}, oun, also is taken for both. But the Prophet seems to give a reason why God had resolved to execute so dreadful a judgment on the Jews; and the reason was, because they were worthy of such a reward. I am therefore inclined to render the word wickedness, as though he had said, ``A dreadful calamity indeed awaits this people; but that they may not complain of my severity, they shall receive the reward of their own wickedness.'' However this may be, the Prophet no doubt wished here to close the mouths of the Jews, that they might not proceed in their evasions, as though God treated them with too little kindness. Hence then it appears, that God does not heedlessly execute his vengeance on the innocent; but that the teachers and the whole people, who approved of them, were involved in the same punishment. [374]

And he says, They shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem by the famine and the sword, or on account of the famine and the sword. They shall then all of them, that is, their carcases, be cast out; for their carcases are evidently meant, as he immediately adds, and no one shall bury them; and he mentions their wives and children. And these had no excuse for themselves, for we have seen in the seventh chapter that this charge was brought against them, rothat the children gathered wood, that the parents kindled the fire, and that the women kneaded the dough to make cakes for their idols. The Prophet then intimates, that no one would escape, because they were all implicated in the same wickedness, some more and some less, but so far, however, that the children were not to go unpunished, because they followed their fathers, nor the wives, because they followed the example of their husbands. It follows ---

[374] These two verses are differently connected by some: the words, “these prophets,” at the end of the fifteenth verse, are joined with the “the people” in the next verse; and this construction is evidently the best, — 15. Therefore, thus saith Jehovah, — As to the prophets who prophesy in my name, (Though I have not sent them, yet they say, — The sword and the famine shall not be in this land) By the sword and by the famine shall they perish: 16. These prophets, and the people, to whom they prophesy, Shall be cast out into the streets of Jerusalem, On account of the famine and the sword; And there will be none to bury them — Neither them, nor their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters; Thus will I pour upon them their own wickedness. The preceding connection is favored by the Septuagint and the Arabic, but the other versions do not join the “prophets” and the “people” together. “Their own wickedness” is “their own evils” in the Septuagint, — “their own evil” in the Vulgate, — and “their own wickedness” in the Syriac. If rendered “wickedness,” then it is a metonymy for the fruit or effect of wickedness; if “evil” then the meaning is, the evil due to them. — Ed.

Jeremiah 14:17

17. Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow.

17. Dices igitur (copula enim loco illativoe particuloe sumitur) ad eos verbum hoc, (hoc est, annunciabis illis hoc verbum) Deducent oculi mei lachrymam (vertunt alii, descendent oculi mei in lachrymam; Hebraicum nomen est singulare) nocte et die, et non quiescent; quoniam contritione magna contrita est virgo, filia populi mei, plaga aegra (vel, acerba) valde.

God shews here again how tardy, yea, how stupid the people were, whom no threatenings could induce to return to a right mind. When, therefore, they daringly neglected all threatenings, God bids a sad spectacle to be presented to them, justly calculated to fin them with fear and shame; he bids his Prophet to speak rims to them, ``Behold, I shall be wholly dissolved into tears, and that on your account.'' The Prophet, no doubt, wept sincerely when he saw his own people wilfully drawing upon themselves the wrath of God and their final dest, ruction; nor could he divest himself of his humane feelings: but he speaks not here only of his own solicitude, but God himself bids him thus to speak, in order that the Jews might be ashamed of their carelessness, as they ridiculed or despised, with dry eyes, the calamity which was nigh them, and the Prophet alone wept for them. We have spoken of this in the ninth chapter and in other places. There indeed the Prophet wished that his eyes were fountains of tears; but his object was, no doubt, not only to shew his concern for his own nation, but also thus to try whether they could be turned to repentance, their hardness being so great: and in this place the same thing is shewn still more clearly; for God bids the Prophet to weep, not in secret, but to declare this to the whole people, Behold, my eyes come down into tears, and there shall be no rest, no cessation.

We now perceive the design of the Holy Spirit; for as the obstinacy of the people was so great that they shed no tears, though God often terrified them with the most dreadful threatenings, it was necessary that this coming calamity should be set before their eyes, in the person of Jeremiah, as in a mirror, in order that they might at length learn to fear. Whenever such passages occur, let us remember that at this day also men are equally stupid, so that they ought not to be less sharply urged, and that, God in the gospel adds vehemence and sharp goads to the truth; for such is not only the sloth of our hearts, but also their hardness, that it is necessary to constrain those who will not suffer themselves to be drawn and led.

Some render the words, ``Descend shall tears from mine eyes;'' but more correct is the other version, ``Mine eyes shall descend into, tears,'' as {ב}, beth, is to be prefixed to {דמעה} damoe, or {ל} lamed; and it is added, night and day, because the daughter of my people is broken with a great breaJeremiah As yet the Jews were indeed existing as a nation; but the Prophet gives here a striking representation, as though the scene was present, that they might know that a sudden destruction was at hand, though they as yet trusted in their own auxiliaries; nor indeed could they

have been led to fear God in any degree until, their quietness was disturbed. [375]

He calls them the virgin daughter of his people, not for honor's sake, but because God had hitherto spared the Jews. Virgin is sometimes taken in a good sense; for God, when speaking of the holy marriage, by which he had bound the Jews to himself, compares his people to a virgin. But the daughter of Babylon is also often called a virgin, because the Chaldeans, through long peace, had accustomed themselves to delicacies. So also in this place the Prophet, by way of concession, says that his own nation were soft and tender, because they had been borne with through the indulgence of God. But as in war virgins are exposed to violations, and the lust of men rages without shame and beyond all limits, so God intended here to set forth the fierceness of his vengeance; as though he had said, ``Now indeed ye are tender and delicate young women, but in a short time your condition will be changed; nor is there any reason why the constant happiness which ye have hitherto enjoyed should deceive you.''

And for the same purpose he adds, that the smiting would be very bitter It was indeed necessary by many words to exaggerate that vengeance, of which the people made no account. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 14:18

18. If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword! and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine! yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not.

18. Si exiero in agrum, ecce (copula enim redundat) occisi gladio; et si ingressus fuero in urbem, ecce dolentes fame (alii volunt esse nomen substantivum, dolores famis, vel, aegritudines;) quia tam propheta quam sacerdos circumeunt ad terram, et nesciunt (alii vertunt, quam nesciunt.)

He confirms the same thing in other words, not on account of the obscurity of what he had said, but because he knew that he was speaking to the deaf, or that such was their sloth, that they needed many goads. He says, in short, that there would be in the city no defense for the people to shield them from the punishment that was at hand, and that if they went into the fields the whole land would be covered with enemies, who would destroy them. This is the sum of the whole.

But he speaks as though he saw the event with his eyes, If I go out into the field, he says, their carcases meet me; for the enemy destroys with his drawn sword all who venture to go forth. Then he says, If I go into the city, there famine kins those whom the enemy has not reached. [376] As he had said before, ``Behold, all were

[375] More consistent with the character of the Hebrew is to render the verse thus, — 17. And thou shalt say to them this word, — Pour down shall my eyes the tear Night and day, and shall not cease; For great has been the breach, Broken has been the virgin of the daughter of my people; The smiting has been very grievous. The event, though future, is represented as having past; for he relates a vision. The "daughter" is not in apposition but in construction with "virgin." Vitringa says, that a state, or a kingdom, is often called a virgin in the prophets. It is rendered here "kingdom" by the Targum. See Isaiah 37:22; 47:1; Jeremiah 31:21; 46:11. "Those cities," says Lowth, "are called virgins, which never came into a conqueror's hands." Jerusalem was in this sense a virgin. He says further, "The dissolution of the body politic is called a breach, in allusion to the breaking of the limbs of the human body." The "smiting," or the stroke, was "very grievous," because the body politic, or the state, was shattered into pieces." — Ed.

[376] I take the words before "sword" and "famine" to be nouns substantive, — "the piercings

east forth in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword.'' But what he had said of the streets of Jerusalem he extends now to the fields; as though he had said, that there would be no place of rest to the Jews; for if they attempted to flee away, they met with the swords of enemies, and if they sought hiding --- places, the famine would meet them, so that they would perish without being destroyed by any enemy.

The prophet, he says, as well as the priest shall wander, shall go round to the land and know not Some explain the last part of the verse as though the Prophet had said, When both the prophets and the priests shall be driven into exile, after many wanderings, they shall not understand that exile is a punishment due to their sins. They therefore take the words, {וידעו} {ולא} vela idou, and they shall not know, in a general sense, as though the Prophet here condemned that brutal blindness which possessed the minds of the people, nay, even of the priests, who did not consider that God punished them for their sins. Others explain the words more simply, --- that they would go round to the land, that is, that they would come to Chaldea by various windings and by long circuits, and would come to a land they knew not, that is, which was before unknown to them. But I know not whether this was the meaning of the Prophet. Certainly a third view seems more suitable to me, though it has none in its favor, that is, that the priests and prophets would go round to seek subterfuges, as they would be destitute of all means of escape, not knowing what to do; and they shall not know, that is, they shall find that a sound mind is by God taken from them, because they had demented others. Hence I doubt not but that the Prophet had especially denounced this punishment on the wicked priests and the false prophets, because they thought that they would have some way of escape; but they would be mistaken; for their own conceit would at length disappoint them; and when they thought of this and of that, God would bring to nothing their crafty ways. And they were worthy of such a punishment, because they had fascinated the wretched people with their lies; and we also know that they were proud of their own crafts and wiles. The Prophet therefore derides this false confidence and says, They shall go round through the land and shall not understand, that is, all their counsels and plans shall be, without any fruit or benefit, though they may be long in forming them. [377] It follows ---

Jeremiah 14:19

19. Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble!

19. An abjiciendo abjecisti Jehudah? an in Sion (an Sion, {ב} redundat) abominata

of the sword," and "the wastings of the famine," — If I go out to the field, Then behold the piercings of the sword; And if I enter the city, Then behold the wastings of the famine. — Ed.

[377] Venema agrees with Calvin as to the meaning of the latter part of the verse: it is indeed the only one that comports with the context; the other explanations are quite foreign to it. Our version is according to the Septuagint and Vulgate; but it is no doubt wrong. Blayney, in some measure, following the Targum, gives the following version, — Yet both the prophet and also the priest Go trafficking about the city and take no knowledge. Meaning, that they went about with their false predictions, like pedlars, for gain, and paid no regard to the miseries of the country. This sense suits the passage, but the other is the most obvious and natural. — Ed.

est anima tua? quare percussisti nos, et nulla nobis medela? expectando pacem (id est, expectavimus pacem) et nihil boni (vel, non bonum) et tempus medelae (idem est verbum,) et ecce terror.

The Prophet now turns to prayer and to complaints, that by his example he might at length rouse the people to lamentation, in order that they might humbly implore God's forgiveness, and sincerely confess their sins and be displeased with themselves. At the same time he indirectly reproves that hardness of which we have before spoken. As then he effected nothing by teaching, he changed his manner of speaking, and leaving the people he addressed God, according to what we have before noticed.

He then asks, Repudiating hast thou repudiated Judah? Has thy soul abominated Sion? [378] Jeremiah seems to reason here from what is inconsistent, as though he had said, ``Is it possible that thou hast rejected the tribe of Judah and Mount Sion?'' For God had promised that he should ever have a lamp at Jerusalem. The ten tribes had already been overthrown, and their kingdom had not only been distressed, but wholly demolished: still there remained a seed, because the tribe of Judah continued, which was as it were the flower of the whole people; and from him the salvation of the world was to proceed. Hence the Prophet does here, as it were, expostulate with God, as though he had said, ``Thou hast chosen the tribe of Judah for this end, that it might be safe perpetually; thou hast also commanded the Temple to be built on Mount Sion for thy name; thou hast said that it would be thy rest for ever: hadst thou then by rejecting rejected the tribe of Judah? does thy soul abominate Mount Sion?

There seems, however, to be a kind of irony implied: for though Jeremiah prayed sincerely, he yet intended to remind the people how foolishly they promised themselves impunity as to their sins, because God had his habitation in the Temple, and because Jerusalem was as it were his royal palace. It is indeed evident that the Prophet recalled to mind the promises of God; but yet he wished briefly to shew, that though God should apparently destroy the remnant, and suffer the Temple to be demolished, he would be still faithful to his promises. In asking therefore these questions, as in astonishment, he had partly a regard to God, and partly also he reminded the people, that though God delivered the body of the people to destruction, he would yet be faithful and constant in what he had promised.

He then says, Why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing? There is no doubt but that the Prophet in this place also wished to turn God to mercy for this reason, because he had promised to be merciful to the posterity of David, though sometimes he punished them for their sins; for there was this remarkable promise,

``If his children shall offend and violate my covenant, I will smite them with a rod and chastise their iniquities; yet my mercy will I not take from them.''
(2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 89:31-33)

And to the same purpose is what he said in Jeremiah 10:24,

``Chastise me, O Lord, but in judgment,''

that is, moderately, ``lest thou bring me to nothing.'' There the Prophet, as we

[378] The first verb means to reject with contempt, and the second, to reject with abhorrence, — Despising, hast thou despised Judah? Has thy soul abhorred Sion? Had he despised Judah as a worthless thing, and had he abhorred Sion as a filthy thing? — Ed.

have said, reminded God of his covenant; and he does the same here, Why hast thou smitten, so that there is no healing? For the punishment which God inflicts on his Church would be, as he declares, a kind of medicine; but when there is no hope of healing, God seems to render void what he had promised. Hence Jeremiah goes on in drawing his argument from what is inconsistent, as though he had said, that it was not possible that God should so severely smite his people as not to allow a place for forgiveness, but that he would at length be intreated and heal the wound inflicted.

We have expected peace, and there is no good; and the time of healing, and behold trouble, or terror. [379] This latter part of the verse confirms what I just stated, that the Prophet had partly a reference to God in this mode of prayer, and that he partly reproved the Jews, because they thought, being deceived by false confidence, that they were beyond the reach of danger, inasmuch as God had consecrated Jerusalem, that his name might be there called upon, and that the Temple might be his perpetual habitation. As then he saw that his nation were inebriated, as it were, with this foolish notion, he intended briefly to shew to them that God would Ilave an unknown way by which he would retain his faithfulness, and yet punish the ungodly and the transgressors; for by saying, ``We expected peace, and there is no good,'' he certainly does not commend the fidelity of the people; for relying on God's promises, they sought comfort in evils, and hoped that God would at length be exorable and propitious. The word expecting is not to be taken in a good sense; but he on the contrary reproves the Jews, because they put too much faith in false prophets. We hence see that he condemns that false expectation by which they had been deceived. Hence also we learn what has been before stated, that the Jews foolishly promised to themselves impunity, because God had chosen his habitation among them; for he shews that God had not in vain threatened their ruin by his servants. This then is also the meaning when he says, We expected the time of healing, and behold terror It now follows ---

Jeremiah 14:20

20. We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee.

20. Cognoscimus, Jehova, scelus nostrum, et iniquitatem patrum nostrorum; quoniam scelerate egimus in te ({חטאנו}, quanquam {רשע} et {חטא} idem fere sunt, tamen simpliciter concludit, quod scelerate egerint adversus Deum.)

The Prophet here prescribes no doubt to the Jews the way of appeasing God. He before uttered a prayer, partly in order to reprove the people for their wicked obstinacy, and partly to shew to the godly and the elect that there remained some hope. But now he uses a simple form of prayer, when he says, O Lord, we know, etc Hardly one in a thousand then did know; but the Prophet does not assume the character of the whole people; and why not? He doubtless knew that the faithful among the people were very few; but he dictates for posterity a right form of prayer,

[379] The proper construction of these lines, and of the preceding, is not commonly given. The "why" before "smitten" is to be understood here, — Why hast thou smitten us, and there is for us no healing? Why has there been hope for peace, and there is no good? And for the time of healing, and behold terror? The word for "hope," or longing, or looking for, is a participial noun, but rendered by the versions as though it were a verb in the first person plural. As "smitten" is in the past tense, so has been is to be understood before "hope." — Ed.

so that they might iu exile know that this one thing only remained for them --- to confess their sins, as otherwise they could not obtain pardon.

He therefore says, We know our wickedness and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have done wickedly against thee We have already explained the Prophet's meaning in these few words, --- that when God puts forth his hand against us, there is no hope of salvation, except we repent. But confession is here put for repentance. Hypocrites are indeed very free in confessing their sins; but the Prophet speaks here of real confession; and by stating a part for the whole, everything included in repentance, as I have said, is intended. But the object here is to shew, that they were humbly to seek forgiveness, which could not be done, except they condemned themselves before God, and thus anticipated his judgment.

He speaks of the iniquity of the fathers, not that the faithful seek associates, here and there, for the sake of extenuating their guilt; but it was an aggravation of their sins, when they confessed that they were not only guilty themselves before God, but that they had brought from the womb what was, as it were, hereditary, so that they deserved death because they were the descendants of ungodly parents. Whilst hypocrites allege the examples of fathers, they think themselves thus absolved, or at least not so culpable, because they had learnt what they practice from their childhood, because a bad education had led them astray. But the faithful are of a far different mind; for they confess themselves worthy of God's vengeance, though he inquired not into the wickedness of their fathers; and they think also that God acts justly, when he executes vengeance on account of their fathers' sins, being thus worthy of a twofold vengeance.

We now then understand what the Prophet means; and hence we learn how foolishly the Papists set up this shield against God; that is, by having the word fathers often on their lips; for they ought on the contrary to confess the wickedness and iniquities of their fathers, according to what is more fully enlarged upon in the ninth chapter of Daniel (Daniel 9), where he confesses that he himself and the fathers and kings had done wickedly. And in these words we may also notice, that it was not some slight fault that Jeremiah refers to when he said, ``We acknowledge our iniquity and the iniquity of our fathers;'' he mentions first the iniquity of the living; then the iniquity of their fathers, and adds, in the third place, ``We have acted wickedly against thee.'' We hence see that he did not formally acknowledge some slight faults, but he confesses most plainly, that they were all ungodly and transgressors of God's law, and were worthy, not merely of a moderate chastisement, but of dreadful perdition, as they had thus provoked the wrath of God. [380]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that though we have been once reconciled to thee, and

[380] There is no and in Hebrew, nor in the Septuagint, nor in the Vulgate, between "wickedness" and "iniquity;" it is found in the Syriac and the Targum. In case it be excluded, Blayney proposes to render the passage thus, "We acknowledge, O Jehovah, that we have wrought wickedly the iniquity of our fathers;" that is, as he adds, "We have practiced over again the same wickedness, of which our fathers set the example." But a meaning is given to {רשע which it never has; nor is this rendering necessary in order to convey this idea, which is probably what is intended. They confessed their wickedness, which was the iniquity of their fathers; it was the same: the latter is in apposition with the former, --- We acknowledge, Jehovah, our wickedness, --- The iniquity of our fathers; For we have sinned against thee. Their wickedness, the same with the wickedness or iniquity of the fathers, was, that they sinned against God. --- Ed.

reconciliation has been testified to us in thy gospel, we yet cease not daily to provoke thy wrath, --- O grant, that we may at least groan, and undissemblingly so condemn our vices, that we may be touched with real and deep sorrow, and thus learn to flee, not only once in our life, but every moment, to thy mercy, that thou mayest be reconciled to us, and not deal with us according to our merits; but since thou hast been once pleased to embrace us with paternal love, for the sake of thy only --- begotten Son, continue this favor to us, until having at length been cleansed from all filth and pollution, we shall become partakers of thy celestial glory, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifty-Eighth

Jeremiah 14:21

21. Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us.

21. Ne rejicias propter nomen tuum, ne rejieias {לבנ}) significat interdum respuere, floccipendere, significat etiam projicere, et eadem est fere signicatio alterius verbi ,{ץאנ} significat enim projicere, et pro nihilo ducere et vilipendere; ne ergo projicias vel vilipendas) solium gloriae tuae; recordare, ne irritum facias (alii vertunt, dissolvas) foedus tuum nobiscum.

Jeremiah goes on with the same prayer; and he made it from love, and also for the purpose of encouraging the faithful, who remained among the people, to seek forgiveness; for he undertakes here to represent the true Church, which was then very small. All indeed boasted that they were the children of God, and gloried in the covenant made with Abraham; but hardly one in a thousand called on God in truth and from the heart. The Prophet then represented the common feeling of a very small number; and yet he proceeded, as I have said, with his prayer.

Hence he says, Reject not, overthrow not, the throne of thy glory; or the meaning of the two verbs may be the same, which seems to me more probable. [381] But the Prophet joined together two verbs, not so much for the sake of ornament as rhetoricians do, as for the purpose of expressing the intenseness of his concern and anxiety; for he saw that the kingdom of Judah was in extreme danger. He then did not in an ordinary way try to turn aside God's vengeance, but he hastened as one to extinguish a fire; for the obtaining of pardon was difficult.

He calls Jerusalem the throne of God's glory, because God had chosen that city where he was to be worshipped, not that he was confined to the Temple, but because the memorial of his name was there, according to what had been usually said,

[381] The versions differ as to the two verbs: "Cease for thy name's sake, and destroy not," etc., is the Septuagint and the Arabic; "Reproach us not, etc., nor dishonor," etc., is the Vulgate; "Be not angry, etc., nor dishonor," etc., is the Syriac; "Cast us not away, etc., nor make vile," etc., is the Targum. Neither of these renderings is correct. The two verbs here used have a similar meaning, though they are different, with those in the 19th verse (Jeremiah 14:19); the first signifies the rejection of a thing as worthless, and the second as vile, or filthy. They may be thus rendered, — Scorn not, for thy name's sake, Abominate not, the throne of thy glory. The same form is adopted in what follows; two verbs are used, which have the same objective case, — Remember, break not, thy covenant with us. Which means, Remember thy covenant, and break it not, or annul it not. Blayney renders the first two lines thus, — Spurn us not for thy name's sake. Dishonor not the throne of thy glory. But "us" is not in the original, nor do the versions give it, except the Vulgate; and dishonor has also been borrowed from that version, and is not the meaning of the verb. No doubt the two verbs refer to the throne. — Ed.

especially by Moses. (Exodus 20:24) Nor was the ark a vain Symbol of his covenant, for God really dwelt there; for the presence of his power and grace was evidenced by the clearest proofs. But as this mode of speaking is often found in the Prophets, it was sufficient for Jeremiah briefly to notice the subject. God indeed, as it is well known, fins heaven and earth, but he gives symbols of his presence wherever he pleases; and as it was his will to be worshipped in the Temple, it is called iris throne, and it is elsewhere called his footstool; for the Scripture describes the same thing in various ways. The Temple is often called the rest of God, his dwelling, his sanctuary, the place of his habitation; it is also called his footstool,

``We will worship at his footstool.'' (Psalm 132:7)

But these various forms are used for the same purpose, though they are apparently different; for where the Temple is called the habitation of God, his palace or his throne, the presence of his power is set forth, as though God dwelt as a friend among his worshippers; but when it is called his footstool, it is for the purpose of checking a superstition which might have crept in; for God raises the minds of the godly higher, lest they should think that his presence is confined to any place.

We then perceive what the Scripture intends and what it means, whenever it calls Jerusalem or the Temple the throne or the house of God.

But we nmst carefully notice what is here mentioned by the Prophet, For thy name's sake We know that whenever the saints pray to be heard for the sake of God's name, they cast aside every confidence in their own worthiness and righteousness. Whosoever then pleads God's name, in order to obtain what he asks, renounces all other things, and fully confesses that he is unworthy to find God propitious to him; for this form of speaking necessarily implies a contrast. As then the Prophet flees to God's name as his only refuge, there is included in the words a confession, such as we have before noticed, --- that the Jews, inasmuch as they had acted wickedly towards God, were unworthy of any mercy; nor could they pacify him by any of their own satisfactions, nor have anytiling by which they could obtain his favor. This then is the meaning; and as this doctrine has been elsewhere more fully handled, it; seems to me sufficient briefly to shew the design of the Prophet.

He calls it the throne of glory, to intimate that God's name would be unknown and unnoticed, or even despised and exposed to reproaches, if he did not spare the people whom he had chosen. The genitive case is used in Hebrew, we know, instead of an adjective; and to enlarge on the subject is useless, as this is one of its primary elements. The Prophet then in calling the Temple the glorious throne of God, in which his majesty shone forth, in a manner reminds God himself not to expose his name to reproaches; for instantly the ungoldly, according to their evil dispositions, would vomit forth their blasphemies; and thus God's name would be reproached.

He afterwards adds, Remember, make not void, thy covenant with us Here also the Prophet strengthens his prayer by calling to mind the covenant: for it might have been said, that the Jews had nothing to do with the holy name of God, with his glory, or with his throne; and doubtless they were worthy of being wholly forsaken by God. As then they had divorced themselves from God, and were wholly destitute of all holiness, the Prophet here brings before God his covenant, as though he had

said, ``I have already prayed thee to regard thine own glory and to spare thine own throne, as thou hast favored the place with so much honor as to reign among us: now, though our impiety is so great that thou mayest justly cast us away yet thou didst not make a covenant with Mount Sion, or with the stones of the Temple, or with material things, but with us; render not void then this thy covenant.''

We hence see that there is great emphasis in the words of the Prophet, when he implores God not to make void, or not to undo, the covenant, which he had made with the people. For though God would have continued true and faithful, had he obliterated the name of the whole people, yet it was necessary that his goodness should contend with their wickedness, his fidelity with their perfidiousness, inasmuch as the covenant of God did not depend on the people's faithfulness or integrity. It was, as it may be said, a mutual stipulation; for God made a covenant with Abraham on this condition --- that he should walk perfectly with him: this is indeed true; and the same stipulation was in force in the time of the Prophets. Yet at the same time Jeremiah assumed this principle --- that the grace of God cannot be wholly obliterated; for he had chosen the race of Abraham, from whom the Redeemer was at length to be born. But Jeremiah intended to extend God's grace still farther, according to what has been already said, and we shall again presently see the same thing. However this may be, he had a just reason for praying, ``Undo not thy covenant with us.'' But God had hidden means of accomplishing his purpose; for he did, according to the common apprehension of men, abolish the covenant by which the Jews thought him to be bound to them; and yet he remained true; for his truth shone forth at length from darkness, after the time of exile was completed. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 14:22

22. Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? art thou not he, O LORD our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things.

22. An in idolis (vel, vanitatibus) gentium, qui pluere faciat? et an coeli dabunt pluviam (vel, et an ex coelis dabunt pluviam) an non tu ipse Jehova Deus noster? et speravimus in te (expectavimus ad te:) quoniam tu fecisti omnia haec.

In order to conciliate the favor of God, Jeremiah says here, that with him is the only remedy in extremities; and it is the same as though by avowing despair he wished to turn God to mercy; as if he had said, ``What will become of us, except thou shewest thyself propitious? for if thou remainest implacable, the Gentiles have their gods from whom they seek safety; but with us it is a fixed principle to hope for and to seek salvation from thee alone.'' Now this argument must have been of great weight; not that God had need of being reminded, but he allows a familiar dealing with himself. For if we wish stoically to dispute, even our prayers are superfluous; for why do we pray God to help us? Does he not himself see what we want? Is he not ready enough to bring us help? But these are delirious things, wholly contrary to the true and genuine feeling of piety. As then we flee to God, whenever necessity urges us, so also we remind him, like a son who unburdens all his feelings in the bosom of his father. Thus in prayer the faithful reason and expostulate with God, and bring forward all those things by which he may be pacified towards them; in

short, they deal with him after the manner of men, as though they would persuade him concerning that which yet has been decreed before the creation of the world: but as the eternal counsel of God is hid from us, we ought in this respect to act wisely and according to the measure of our faith.

However this may be, the Prophet, according to the common practice of the godly, seeks to conciliate the favor of God by this argument, --- that unless God dealt mercifully with his people and in his paternal kindness forgave them, it was all over with them, as though he had said, ``O Lord, thou alone art he, from whom we can hope for salvation; if now we are repudiated by thee, there remains for us no refuge: wilt thou send thy people to the idols and the inventions of the heathens? but we have looked for thee alone; thou then seest that there remains for us no hope of salvation but from thy mercy.''

But the Prophet here testifies in the name of the faithful, that when extremities oppress the miserable, they cannot obtain any help from the idols of the heathens. Can they give rain, he says? He states here a part for the whole; for he means that the idols of the heathens have no power whatever. Hence to give rain is to be taken for everything necessary to sustain mankind, either to bring help, or to supply the necessaries of life, or to bestow abundance of blessings. Paul also, in speaking of God's power, refers to rain, (Acts 14:17) and Isaiah often uses this kind of speaking, (Isaiah 5:6)

He then says, Are there any among the vanities of the heathens? etc. He here condemns and reproaches all superstitions; for he does not call them the gods of the heathens, though this word is often used by the prophets, but the vanities of the heathens. Are there any, he says, who can cause it to rain? and can the heavens give rain? I may give a more free rendering, ``Can they from heaven give rain?'' for it seems not to me so suitable to apply this to the heavens. If, however, the common rendering is more approved, let every one have his own judgment; but if the heavens are spoken of, the argument is from the less to the greater; ``Not even the heavens give rain; how then can vanities? how can the devices of men do this, which only proceed from their foolish brains? Can they give rain? For doubtless there is some implanted power in the heavens? but man, were he to devise for himself a thousand gods, cannot yet form one drop of rain, and cause it to come down from heaven. Since, then, the heavens do not of themselves give rain, but at the command of God, how can the idols of the heathens and their vain inventions send rain for us from heaven?'' The object of the Prophet is now sufficiently evident, which was to shew, that, if God rejected the people, and resolved to punish their sins with the utmost rigor, and in an implacable manner, their salvation was hopeless; for it was not their purpose to flee to idols.

Art not thou, he says, Jehovah himself, or alone? Art not thou Jehovah himself, and our God? [382] He first mentions the name Jehovah, by which is meant the eternal

[382] It is better to regard this line as declaring that God is the giver of rain and showers, — 22. Are there any among the vanities of the nations who bring rain? And do the heavens give showers? Art thou not he who givest them, Jehova, our God? So we will look to thee, For thou makest all these. To introduce the word "can," borrowed from the Vulgate, into the first questions, obscures the passage. "All these" refer, as it appears, to the rain and showers. The perfect tense in Hebrew often includes the past and the present, "For thou hast made and

majesty and power of God; and then he joins another sentence, --- that he was their God, to remind him of his covenant. Then it is added, We have looked to thee, for thou hast made all these things

Here many, in my judgment, are mistaken, for they apply ``these things'' to the heavens and the earth, and to all the elements, as though the Prophet declared that God was the creator of the world, and that therefore all things are under his control. But I have no doubt but that he speaks of those punishments which God had already inflicted on the people, and had resolved soon to inflict; for he does not speak here of God's power, whiich shines forth in the workmanship of the world; but he says, ``We have looked to thee, for thou hast made all these things;'' that is, from thee alone salvation will come to us: for thou who hast inflicted the wound canst alone heal, according to what is said in another place,

``God kills and brings to life, he leads to the grave and restores.''
(1 Samuel 2:6)

It is then the same as though the Prophet had said, ``We, O Lord, do now flee to thy mercy, for no one but thou alone can help us, as thou art he who has punished our sins. Since then thou hast been our Judge, thou also canst alone deliver us now from our calamities; and no one can resist thee, since the highest power is thine alone. Let all the gods of the heathens unite, yea, all the elements and all creatures, for the purpose of serving us, yet what will all that they can do avail us? As then thou hast made all these things, that is, as these things have not happened to us by chance, but are the effects of thy just vengeance --- as thou hast been judge in inflicting these punishments, be now our Physician and Father; as thou hast heavily afflicted us, so now bring comfort and heal those evils which we justly suffer, and indeed through thy judgment.'' We now understand the real meaning of the Prophet.

And hence may be learned a useful doctrine, --- that there is no reason why punishments, which are signs of God's wrath, should discourage us so as to prevent us from venturing to seek pardon from him; but, on the contrary, a form of prayer is here prescribed for us; for if we are convinced that we have been chastised by God's hand, we are on this very account encouraged to hope for salvation; for it belongs to him who wounds to heal, and to him who kins to restore to life. Now follows ---

makest all these," etc. So Gataker regards the meaning. The Syriac has "For thou makest," etc. Calvin as far as I can find, stands alone in the sense he attaches to these words. If we take the verb strictly in the past tense, the meaning commonly given is, that God made the heavens, rain, and showers, and that, as he has made them, they are still under his control. But the other meaning is more suitable to the passage, — that God makes the rain and the showers. — Ed.

Chapter 15

CHAPTER 15

Jeremiah 15:1-2

I. Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.

1. Et dixit Jehova ad me, Si steterint Moses et Samuel coram facie mea, non est anima (id est cor meum) ad populum hunc; emitte a facie mea et exeant.

2. And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the LORD; Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity.

2. Et erit, si dixerint tibi, Quo exibimus? (vel, egrediemur) tunc dices illis, Sic dicit Jehova, Qui ad mortem, ad mortem, et qui ad gladium, ad gladium, et qui ad famem, ad famem, et qui ad captivitatem, ad captivitatem.

God again repeats what we have before observed, --- that as the impieties and sins of the people had arrived at the highest pitch, there was no more room for pardon or for mercy: and though God seems to have rejected altogether the prayer of his servant, we are not yet to think that it was without any benefit. Jeremiah wished indeed to deliver the whole people from destruction; but he did not thus pray inconsiderately and uselessly; for he distinguished between the titular church, as they say, and the chosen seed, for he knew that many were become the degenerated children of Abraham: nor was he unacquainted with what is said in the Psalms,

``Who shall dwell in thy tabernacle, and who shall stand on the mount of thy holiness?
He who is innocent as to his hands, and is of a pure heart.'' (Psalm 15:1, 2)

The Prophet there distinctly shews that hypocrites glory in vain, because they had a free entrance into the Temple, and sacrificed together with the faithful; for a clean

heart and pure hands are required. Jeremiah no doubt fully understood this.

Though then he extended his solicitude to the whole body of the people, he yet knew that there was a chosen seed. So at this day, when we pray, we ought, according to the rule of charity, to include all, for we cannot fix on those whom God has chosen or whom he has rejected; and thus we ought, as far as we can, to promote the salvation of all; and yet we know, as a general truth, that many are reprobate for whom our prayers will avail nothing; we know this, and yet we cannot point out any one as by the finger. So then the prayer of Jeremiah was not useless; but in its very form, as they say, it was not heard, for he wished the whole people to be saved; but as God had resolved to destroy the ungodly, such as were beyond the reach of hope on account of their untamable obstinacy, Jeremiah obtained only in part what he prayed for, --- that God would preserve his Church, which then was in a manner hidden.

But it is now said, If stand before me did Moses and Samuel, [383] my soul would not be towards this people The meaning is, that though all intercessors came forth in their behalf, they could do nothing, for God had rejected them. Moses and Samuel are here mentioned, but in another place Job and Daniel are named, and for the same reason. (Ezekiel 14:14) Moses is mentioned here, because we find that he offered himself, and wished to be, an anathema for his people.

``Blot me out of the book of life, or spare this people.'' (Exodus 32:32)

As then God's wrath had been so often pacified by Moses, he is here mentioned; for when it was all over with the people, he delivered them as it were from eternal death, and this was well and commonly known to the Jews. As to Samuel, we know how celebrated he was, and that God had been often pacified by him for the preservation of the whole people; but at length, when he prayed for Saul, God did indeed restrain his immoderate zeal, and forbade him to pray any more, (1 Samuel 16:1) and yet he ceased not to pray. As then there was so great a fervor in Samuel, that he in a manner struggled with God, he is here joined with Moses: *``If, then, stand before me did* these two, my soul, or my heart, would be alienated from this people, for I shall be no more pacified towards them.''

But he speaks of the perverse multitude, which had so often wilfully sought their own destruction; for, as it has appeared elsewhere, the people had never been rejected; and yet we must distinguish between the chaff and the wheat. Judea was, as it were, the threshing --- floor of God, on which there was a great heap of chaff, for the multitude had departed from true religion; and there were a few grains found hid in the rubbish. Hence the heart of God was not towards the people, that is, towards the degenerated children of Abraham, who were proud only of their name, while they were covenant --- breakers; for they had long ago forsaken the true worship of God and all integrity. Therefore the heart of God was not towards them. At the same time he preserved, in a wonderful and in a hidden manner, a remnant.

[383] Noticed here may be an identity of idiom in Hebrew and Welsh: The verb “stand” is in the singular number, though followed by two nominative cases. So it is in Welsh: and were the nominative cases before it, the verb would be in the plural number. Pe savai Moses a Samuel o'm blaen. This is the Hebrew, word for word. Both the Septuagint and the Vulgate retain the singular number of the verb; but they are not grammatically correct. — Ed.

Now this passage teaches us what James also mentions, that the prayer of the righteous avails much with God; and he brings forward the example of Elijah, who closed heaven by his prayer, so that it rained not for a long time; and who afterwards opened heaven by his prayer, so as to obtain rain from God. (James 5:16-18) He hence infers that the prayers of the righteous avail much, not only when they pray for themselves, but also when they pray for others; for Elijah had no particular regard for himself, but his object was to gain relief for the whole people. It is indeed certain that the intercession of the saints is highly appreciated by God; and hence it is that we are bidden winingly and freely to make known to one another our necessities, so that we may mutually help and pray for one another. But we must at the same time observe, that they who think themselves to be commended to God by others in their prayers, ought not on that account to become more secure; for it is certain, that as the prayers of the faithful avail the members of Christ, so they do no good to the ungodly and the hypocrites. Nor does God indeed bid us to acquiesce in the confidence, that others pray for us, but bids every one to pray, and also to join their prayers with those of all the members of the ChurJeremiah Whosoever then desires to profit by the prayers of the saints must also pray himself.

It is true, I allow, that the prayers of the saints sometimes benefit even the ungodly and aliens; for it was not in vain that Christ prayed,

``Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,'' (Luke 23:34)

nor did Stephen pray in vain when he offered up a similar prayer,

(Acts 7:60) and I am disposed to agree with what Augustine says, that Paul, among others, was the effect of Stephen's prayer. (Serm. 1, de Sanctis) But I am speaking now of what we must do when we find that we are helped by the prayers of the saints, that is, that we are strenuously to perform our part, and strive to shew for our brethren the same solicitude and care as we expect from them. It is then certain beyond a doubt, that each is not only heard when he prays for himself, but that the prayers of the saints avail in behalf of others.

But extremely ridiculous are the Papists, who apply this passage to dead saints: Moses and Samuel, they say, were dead, when God declared what is here said; it is then true that they prayed. The inference is worthy of such teachers, which is as good as the braying of an ass. There is here a supposition made, as though God did say, ``If Moses and Samuel were now alive and interceded for them, I would yet remain implacable.'' But Ezekiel mentions Daniel, who was then living, and he names also Job. We hence see that he makes no distinction between the dead and the living. Therefore the Papists are extremely foolish and stupid when they thus idly prate that the dead pray for the living, on the ground of what is here said of Moses and Samuel. It is not then worthwhile to refute this ignorant assertion, as it vanishes almost of itself: a brief warning, lest ally one should be deluded by such a cavil, is sufficient. [384]

[384] Venema, referring to this notion of the Papists, says, “The words are not that they stood, but that if they stood; he speaks not of them as dead, but as living, intimating, that if they were alive and interceded for the people, they would not succeed in delivering them.” We shall add an observation of Scott — “This passage fully proves that departed saints do not intercede for us; for it evidently implies that Moses and Samuel did not then stand before the Lord in behalf of Israel or of any in Israel.” — Ed.

He afterwards bids the Prophet to east away the people; cast them away, or banish them, he says, from my presence He doubtless speaks here in a strong manner, ``Let them be gone from me.'' But yet God shews what he had commanded his Prophet; as though he had said, ``Fulfil thou thine office, remember what burden I have laid on thee.'' Jeremiah had been ordered to denounce exile on the people? he was the herald of divine vengeance. As then he sustained this office, it was his duty to execute the commission which God had given him. We now then apprehend what these words mean, cast them away [385]

But we must again notice here what we have before seen, --- that God commends the efficacy of prophetic doctrine, according to what has been said,

``I set thee over nations and kingdoms, to plant and to root up, to build and to destroy,'' (Jeremiah 1:10)

Then God intimates, that so great a power would be in the mouth of his servant, that though the Jews mocked at his predictions, as if they were vain threatenings to frighten children, they would yet be like thunderbolts; so that Jeremiah would drive away the people, as though he was furnished with a large army and great forces, according to what Paul declares, --- that he had power given him to cast down every height that exalted itself against Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5) As then God claims so great an authority for his prophetic doctrine, when threatening the unbelieving with punishment, let us know that the same extends to all the promises of salvation. Therefore, whenever God offers grace to us by the gospel, and testifies that he will be propitious to us, let us know that heaven is in a manner open to us; and let us not seek any other ground of assurance than his own testimony: and why? because as to the prophets was given the power of binding and loosing, so now the same power is given to the Church, that is, to invite all to be saved who are as yet healable, and to denounce eternal ruin on the reprobate and the obstinate in their wickedness, according to what is said by Christ,

``Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'' (Matthew 16:19; 18:18)

For he gave his Apostles the power not only of binding, but also of loosing. And Paul, after having spoken in high terms of the former power, adds,

``When your obedience shall be accomplished,''
(2 Corinthians 10:6)

as though he had said, that the gospel was not preached only for this end, to pronounce death on the reprobate, but that it was also a pledge of salvation to all

[385] The verb means more properly to send; he was to send them from God's presence by his doctrine, intimating that God disowned and rejected them: and they were to go forth or to go out, that is, from his presence. The allusion is to the sending away a divorced woman, — Send them from my presence, and let them go forth: 2. And it shall be, when they say to thee, "Where shall we go forth?" that thou shalt say to them — Thus saith Jehova, — "Those for death, to death; And those for the sword, to the sword; And those for the famine, to the famine; And those for captivity, to captivity." It is observed by Venema and Blaney, that "death" was that by pestilence. See Jeremiah 14:12, Jeremiah 18:21. Some were destined for death by pestilence, to this they were to go forth: and so as to the other evils. The Rabbis say that there are gradations in the evils mentioned here: death by pestilence is the less grievous than the sword; the sword than the famine; the famine than captivity; the last being more grievous than all the other evils. See 2 Samuel 24:13, 14; Lamentations 4:9; and Leviticus 26:39. The "sword" being the principal weapon, is put here for any violent death inflicted by enemies. — Ed.

the elect, to them who embraced by true faith the promises offered to them.

He now confirms the previous sentence, If they shall say, Whither shall we go forth? then shalt thou say to them, Those for death, to death; those for the sword, to the sword; those for the famine, to the famine; those for exile, to exile; as though he had said, ``In vain do they complain of their own miseries.'' For God, no doubt, had in view the clamorous complaints which prevailed everywhere among the people on account of their very heavy calamities. Thus indeed were hypocrites wont to do; for whenever God spared them, they haughtily insulted the prophets, and boastingly alleged their subsidies and fortresses; but when God's hand pressed hard on them, they became very eloquent in their complaints: ``Alas! how far will God go at length? is there to be never an end? and what does all this mean? why does he so severely afflict us? and why does he not at least relieve us in some measure from our ntiseries?'' As then the hypocrites were so querulous in their calamities, God anticipates all these expostulations, and says, ``If they say to thee, `Where shall we flee?' say to them, `Either to death, or to famine, or to the sword, or to exile;' it is all one with God, and it matters not; for there is no hope of mercy for you any longer, since God has rejected you: know then that it is all over with you, for there is no deliverance for you from God: either the sword, or famine, or some other kind of death will overtake you; ye are in every way past hope.''

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou art graciously pleased to exhort us to repent, and withholdest thine hand, yea, and allowest us the opportunity to repent, --- O grant, that we may not obstinately provoke against ourselves thy extreme vengeance, but render ourselves obedient to thee, so that thou mayest not only hear others praying for us, but that our own prayers may also obtain pardon from thee, espedally through the intercession of Christ, thine only --- begotten Son, who has once for all reconciled thee to us, and whose perpetual intercession is to continue to reconcile us to thee, until we shall appear at length before thee with all our spots and filth wholly washed away, and be made partakers of that glory which has been obtained for us by Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifty-Ninth

Jeremiah 15:3

3. And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the LORD: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy.

3. Et praeliciam super eos quatuor familias, dicit Jehova, gladium ad occidendum, et canes ad trahendum, et avem coelorum et bestiam terrae, ad comedendum et perdendum.

Jeremiah proceeds with the same subject. He said yesterday that the people were no longer cared for by God, and so that nothing remained for them but in various ways to perish, and that the last punishment would be exile. He now confirms the same thing, and says, that God would prepare against them ravenous birds as well as wild beasts, the sword and dogs [386] as though he had said, that all animals would

[386] Our version ascribes tearing to dogs, but the verb means to draw or drag about, as rendered

be hostile to them, and be the executioners of God's vengeance.

Some render the verb {פקד}, pekod, to visit, but improperly, as I think; for they must give this version, ``I will visit four families upon them;'' but there is no sense in this, nor can any sense be elicited from it. The meaning most suitable here is to set over, [387] ``I will set over them four kinds;'' which he calls ``four families.'' And there is to be understood here a contrast: as they thought it hard to obey God, they were now to have over them dogs and wild beasts, and the birds of the air, and the sword. The meaning is, that there would be no end to God's vengeance, and to various punishments, until the Jews were wholly destroyed. He further intimates, that he would have in readiness many to execute his wrath, as he had all creatures under his control. As then he would employ in his service dogs, and birds, and animals, as well as men, it behoved the Jews to feel assured that they in vain had recourse to this or that refuge. We indeed know that men impiously confine the power of God, both with regard to their salvation and the punishment of their sins, for when he passes by any evil they think that they have escaped, and promise themselves impunity, as though God indeed were not able every moment to inflict many and various scourges. This then is the reason why the Prophet speaks here of four kinds of judgments. It follows ---

Jeremiah 15:4

4. And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem.

4. Et ponam eos in commotionem omnibus regnis terrae propter Manasse, filium Ezechiae, regem Jehudah, (vel, regis Jehudah, parum interest,) propter ea quae fecit in Jerusalem.

Jeremiah speaks now of exile. He had hitherto spoken of the sword and famine, and mentioned also other punishments, that their carcases would be dragged about by dogs, and also devoured by wild beasts and ravenous birds; but he now refers to one kind of punishment only --- that God would drive them into exile. And he seems to have taken these words from Moses, for so he speaks in Deuteronomy 28, except that {ו}, vau, is placed before {ע}, ain, in the word ``commotion,'' but such a change is common. In other respects there is a perfect agreement.

I will set them, he says, for a commotion to all the kingdoms of the earth; that is, I will cause them to wander in constant fear and trembling. He amplifies the grievousness of exile by the circumstance that they should have no safe rest. They who leave their country for exile do at least find some corner where they take breath; but God declares that the Jews would be everywhere unsettled and wanderers, so that no place would receive them. And hence God's vengeance became more fully

by Calvin. It is more descriptive of what is done by dogs, and conveys a more horrid idea, and intended doubtless to terrify the Jews. Blayney renders it “to drag about,” and no doubt correctly. Our version is the Vulgate: the Syriac is to draw or drag about. — Ed.

[387] So Gataker, “I will set over them, etc., as in Leviticus 26:16; a borrowed speech from officers set over people.” The Syriac expresses the idea, “I will punish them with four scourges.” Blayney’s version is — And I will commission against them four species. But the best rendering is that of Calvin, which is also adopted by Venema. I give the following version — And I set over them four kinds, saith Jehovah, — The sword to kill, and dogs to drag about, And the bird of heaven and the beast of the earth To devour, and to pull to pieces. The “devouring” refers to “the beast of the earth,” and the “pulling to pieces” to the bird of heaven, according to the usual style of the Prophets, the order being reversed. — Ed.

manifest, for these miserable men never found an asylum when scattered through various countries. Though they had habitations in those parts allotted to them by the king of Babylon, they were yet everywhere without any rest. It was not therefore in vain that Moses threatened them with such a punishment, nor was it to no purpose that Jeremiah repeated what had been said by Moses. [388]

He adds the cause, On account of Manasseh But Manasseh was now dead, why then did God transfer the vengeance which he merited to posterity? And this seems inconsistent with another passage found in Ezekiel,

``The soul that sinneth it shall die.'' (Ezekiel 18:8)

But doubtless God justly punished the wickedness of the people even after the death of that ungodly king, for they ceased not to accumulate evils on evils; as however their impiety appeared especially at that time, he particularly noticed it, that the Jews might understand that they had been long worthy of destruction, and that punishment was not delayed except through the great mercy of God, who had not immediately treated them as they deserved. The Prophet therefore commends the long forbearance of God because their ruin was suspended until that time. And, on the other hand, he shews that they were not so severely treated but that they were worthy of greater and more atrocious punishment; for such had been their obstinacy that they did all they could to draw upon themselves destruction many times.

But another question arises: Manasseh pretended repentance, and God seemed to have forgiven him and the whole people, (2 Kings 21:2 Chronicles 33:12) why does he now declare that he would take vengeance on sins which had been already buried? But the answer is evident, for the Jews from that time had been in no way better. As then they had continued to pursue the same sinful courses with Manasseh, it was right that they should at length be rewarded as they deserved; for, had they become really changed, there would have been a change in God's dealings with them, but inasmuch as their impiety had ever remained the same, and as they gave themselves up to the same vices, a heavier judgment was nigh them, and justly so, because they had abused God's forbearance, who had spared the king as well as themselves on the condition of receiving the pardon offered to them. But since they had hardened themselves, it was riglit to take such account of their ingratitude and perverseness as to treat them with greater severity.

Farther, Manasseh is called the son of Hezekiah, and that for the purpose of en-

[388] Blayney rightly observes that the word rendered “to be removed,” in our version, has no such meaning. The verb means to move, to agitate, to disquiet, but not to move from one place to another. The noun as found here is rendered “vexation” in Isaiah 28:19, and “trouble” in 2 Chronicles 29:8. The idea of removing is not given in any of the versions, nor in the Targum. It is used in two other places by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 24:9; Jeremiah 29:18). In both places “vexation, trouble, or disquietude,” would be the best rendering. This sentence may be thus translated — And I will render them a vexation to all the kingdoms of the earth. Literally it is, “I will give them for a vexation,” etc. And so they became, they were a trouble and a disquietudewherever they were; and hence they became, as it is said in Jeremiah 29:18, a curse, a hissing, and a reproach among all nations. Venema gives this rendering — And I will give them for a shaking to all the kingdoms of the earth. Which he understands to mean, that they would be given to be shaken, agitated, and disquieted in all the kingdoms of the earth. Blayney’s version is — And I will give them up to vexation in all kingdoms of the earth. But this is what the original will hardly bear; the preposition before “kingdoms” is not in, but to. — Ed.

hancing his crime. For as religion had been reformed in the time of Hezekiah, and as that pious king, with great labor and toil, exerted all his powers to restore the true worship of God, it was the duty of Manasseh to follow his example. But he not only built altars to idols, and polluted the whole land with superstitions, but also defiled the very Temple of God. It was thus a horrible, and wholly a diabolical madness in the son, when the right way of worshipping God had been delivered unto him, to be of such a reprobate mind as immediately to overthrow what his father with great labor has so faithfully established. This then was the reason why Jeremiah mentioned to his dishonor the name of his father. And hence we learn that they are worthy of a heavier punishment, who have been religiously brought up from their childhood, and become afterwards degenerated, who, having had pious and godly parents, afterwards abandon themselves to every wickedness. Hence a heavier judgment awaits those who depart from the examples of godly fathers. And this we gather from the very words of the Prophet, who here, by way of reproach, calls Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, which yet would have been to his honor, had he been like his father and followed his piety.

And at the same time there is no doubt but that the Prophet indirectly condemns the whole people; for we know how great opposition pious Hezekiah met with, and how he contended for the faithful worship of God, as though he had been among the Assyrians or the Egyptians. But the perverseness of the people appeared then extreme, when he was put in jeopardy as to the kingdom, because he endeavored to cleanse the land of Judah from its filth and pollutions; their impiety and ingratitude then shewed, and openly discovered themselves. Afterwards Manasseh overturned as it were in an instant the worship of God, and they all, with great exultation, went immediately after superstition. We hence see that the mouths of the Jews were thus closed, so that they could not object and say, that they obeyed the command of their king; for they winingly followed wicked superstitions. They assented to the king of their own accord, while yet they hardly, and with great unwiningness, were led to obey when God's worship was restored in the time of Hezekiah.

But Manasseh added cruelties to superstitions; for we know that he not only covered the streets of the city with blood, but made it also to flow in streams, as sacred history relates. As, then, the Prophets were so cruelly treated in the time of Manasseh, and as he was not the sole author of this barbarity, but the true servants of God were persecuted to death by the consent of the people, it was hence evident that it was the crime of the whole community. And hence he mentions Jerusalem, in order that the Jews might know that the holy city, in which they gloried, had been for a long time the den of robbers, and that the Temple of God had been polluted by wicked superstitions, and even the whole city by unlawful and barbarous slaughters. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 15:5-6

5. For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest?

5. Nam quis parcet tibi Jerusalem (vel, quis miserebitur tui? sed {חמל} proprie est ignoscere vel parcere; hic tamen accipitur pro indulgere vel misereri: quis ergo

miserebitur tui Jerusalem?) et quis consolabitur te? et quis locum mutabit ad inquirendum de pace tibi? (hoc est, tua: jungamus et alterum versum:)

6. Thou hast forsaken me, saith the LORD, thou art gone backward: therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting.

6. Tu reliquisti me, dieit Jehova; retrorsum abiisti; ideo extendam manum meam super te et perdam to: fatigatus sum poenitendo.

The Prophet shews here that the severe punishment of which he had spoken could not be deemed unjust, according to what those men thought who were querulous, and ever expostulated with God, and charged him with too much rigour. Lest, then, the Jews should complain, the Prophet says briefly, that all the evils which were nigh at hand were fully due, and so deserved, that they could find no pity, even among men. We know that the worst of men, when the Lord punishes them, have some to condole with them. There is no one so wicked that relatives do not favor him, and that some do not console him. But the Prophet shews that the Jews were not only inexcusable before God, but that they were undeserving of any sympathy from men.

He first says, Who will pity thee? and then, Who will console with thee? The verb. {נוד}, nud, means properly to give comfort by words, as when relatives, and friends, and neighbors meet together for the purpose of mourning; they hear lamentations, and join in them. But he says that no one would perform this office towards Jerusalem. He adds, in the third place, And who will turn aside? or, strictly, change place --- Who will change place to enquire? or, as some render it, to pray. The verb {שאל} shal, means properly to ask, and hence sometimes to pray. So, many give this meaning, that there would be no one to pray for the Jews. But if we consider the construction of the sentence, we shall see that the Prophet speaks of that duty of kindness which men cultivate and observe towards one another, by enquiring of their welfare, --- ``Are all things well with thee?'' How dost thou do? Are all things well with thee and thine?'' When we thus enquire of the state of any one we shew some concern for him, for love is always solicitous for the welfare of others. The Prophet then says, ``Who will turn aside to thee to enquire of thy welfare?'' that is, that he may know how thou art, and what is thy state and condition.

We hence see that the Jews are here divested of every complaint, for the whole world would acknowledge them to be unworthy of any commiseration. But the Prophet does not mean that all would act cruelly towards Jerusalem, but rather shews, that such were their crimes that there was no room for courtesy, or for those acts of kindness which men of themselves perform towards one another. [389]

[389] There is a general agreement as to the two first clauses of this verse, but not as to the last. The Syriac and the Targum give the meaning advocated by Calvin, with whom Gataker, Grotius, and Blayney agree. But the Septuagint and the Vulgate seem to take the other view, that to "pray for peace" is what is meant; and this has been adopted by Montanus, Castalio, and Venema. But the former is no doubt substantially the right view, though the phrase used, "to salute," or "to enquire of one's welfare," or "how thou doest," is too general. In 1 Samuel 25:5 (see also 1 Samuel 10:4) we have the same form of words too loosely rendered, "greet him in my name," in our version. The following verse shews that the rendering ought to be, "wish (or bid) him peace in my name." Literally it is, "Ask for him in my name for peace." So here the literal rendering is, — Or who will turn aside to ask for peace for thee? or, in our language, "to bid thee peace." The word "turn aside" seems clearly to favor this meaning. In the other case its import does not appear. The intimation is, that no one would deem it worth his while to turn out of his way to express a good wish in behalf of Jerusalem. — Ed.

Then follows the reason --- For thou hast forsaken me, saith Jehovah Since, then, God had been rejected by the Jews, did not such a defection bring its deserved reward, when they were deprived of every human aid? He afterwards adds, Backward hast thou gone He intimates that there was a continuance in their wicked defection; for they not only forgot God for a time, but departed far from him, so as to become wholly alienated.

It then follows --- And I will stretch out, etc.; that is, ``therefore will I stretch out,'' etc.; for the copulative is to be taken here as an inative. This may be viewed as in the past or the future tense; for God had in a measure already afflicted the people; but heavier judgments awaited them. I am inclined to regard it as a prediction of what was to come, as it immediately follows, I am weary with repenting, that is, ``I have so often repented that I cannot possibly be induced now to forgive; for I see that I have been so often deceived, that I camlot hear to be deceived any longer.'' Some, indeed, give this version, --- ``I am weary with consoling myself,'' and {נחם}, nuchem, means both; but the other sense seems to me the most suitable. I doubt not then but that the Prophet means repentance. We indeed know that God changes not his purpose; for men repent because their expectation often disappoints them, when things happen otherwise than they had thought; but no such thing can happen to God; and he is said to repent according to our apprehensions. God then repents of his severity whenever he mitigates it towards his people, whenever he withdraws his hand from executing his vengeance, whenever he forgives sins. And this had been often done to the Jews; but they had made a mock of such mercy, and the oftener God spared them the more audaciously did they provoke his wrath. Hence he says, ``I am weary with repenting so often;'' that is, that he had so often spared them and suspended his judgment. [390]

In short, he deprives the Jews of every excuse, and shews that they acted impiously when they murmured against God, for they allowed no place to his mercy; nay, whenever they found him recentliable they abused his forbearance with extreme indignity and perverseness. It follows ---

Jeremiah 15:7

7. And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land; I will bereave them of children, I will destroy my people, since they return not from their ways.

7. Et ventilabo ventilabro ipsos in omnibus portis terrae, (id est, per omnes portas;) orbavi, perdidi populum meum; viis suis non recesserunt (vel, non reversi sunt, vel, non sunt conversi.)

[390] The verse may be thus rendered, — 6. Thou hast broken loose from me, saith Jehovah; Backward dost thou walk; But I will stretch my hand over thee and destroy thee; I have become wearied with repenting. The verb here used, commonly rendered "forsake," means to loose oneself from restraints: the Jews were bound, as it were, to God by covenant; they broke loose from this bond, they freed themselves from this tie, and went back to idolatry. "Walk," though future, is to be taken here as present. The last line in the Septaugint is as follows — "I will no longer release them;" and in the Syriac, "I will no longer spare them." The verb {{נחם seems to have been taken as coming from {נח} with an {ם} affixed, and put here in Hiphil --- ``I m wearied with causing them to rest,'' or, ``with forbearing,'' as rendered by Blayney. But our version, which is that of Calvin, seems preferable, and is adopted by Piscator, Grotius, and Venema. The last indeed proposes the joining of this line with the next verse, which Blayney has adopted, and in that case he prefers the reading of the Septuagint and Syriac. Then the passage would be, --- I am wearied with forbearing them, or, with suffering them to rest; 7. And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land. He truly says that there is a kind of contrast between the suffering of them to rest quietly, and the fanning of them in the gates of land for the purpose of dispersing them. --- Ed.

He confirms here the same truth. The verb which I have rendered in the future may be rendered in the past tense, but I still think it to be a prediction of what was to come. But as to what follows, I have bereaved, I have destroyed, it must, I have no doubt, be referred to time past.

He then says, I will fan or scatter them, for the verb. {זרה} zare, means to scatter, but as with a fan follows, (the word is derived from the same root) I wish to retain the repetition. Then it is, I will fan them with a fan through all the gates of the earth Many give the meaning, ``through the cities,'' which I do not approve, as it seems a frigid explanation. On the contrary the Prophet means by ``the gates of the earth,'' all countries, for the Jews thought that they should be always safe and quiet in their own cities. By taking a part for the whole, gates do indeed, as it appears elsewhere, signify cities; but as the Jews trusted in their own defences, and thought that they could never be drawn out from these quiet nests, the word gates is in a striking manner transferred to signify any kind of exit; I will fan you, says God, but where? through all gates of the earth, or through all countries and through all deserts; wherever there is a region open for you there you must pass through. Ye are wont to pass in and out through your gates, and ye have there your quiet homes, but there shall be hereafter to you other cities, other gates, even all countries and all deserts, all ways, and, in short, every sort of passage. [391]

Then follows, I have bereaved, I have destroyed my people; they have not returned from their own ways Here no doubt he condemns the Jews for their sottishhess, because they had not repented after having been warned by grievous judgments, which God had executed partly on them and partly on their brethren. For the kingdom of Israel had been cut off: when they saw the ten tribes driven into exile ought they not to have been terrified by such an example? Hence also another Prophet says,

``There is no one who mourns for the bruising of Joseph.'' (Amos 6:6)

God had set before their eyes a sad and dreadful spectacle; they ought then to have acknowledged in the destruction of Israel what they themselves deserved, and to have turned to God. It is then this extreme hardness that God upbraids them with, for though he had bereaved his people, the ten tribes, and destroyed them, and though also the kingdom of Judah had been in a great measure depressed, yet they returned not from their own ways. It hence appeared more fully evident that they deserved the severest judgments, as they were become wholly irreclaimable. He then adds ---

Jeremiah 15:8

8. Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas: I have brought upon them against the mother of the young men a spoiler at noonday: I have caused him to fall upon it suddenly, and terrors upon the city.

8. Multiplicatae sunt mihi viduae ejus supra arenam maris, (prae arena maris;) immisi illis (venire feci illis) super matrem juvenis (id est, super turmam, vel, multi-

[391] Though Calvin has many on his side in his view as to "the gates," yet the most suitable meaning is that presented in our version. God is represented as a fanner, standing in "the gates of the land," that is, in the gates of the cities of the land, and thence fanning or scattering the inhabitants to all parts of the world. — Ed.

tudinem juvenum) vastatorem in meridie; et projeci (cadere feci, ad verbum) super ipsam repente tumultum et terrores, (quanquam de his vocibus postea erit aliquid dicendum.)

He says first, Multiplied have been his widows; because the men had been almost all kined, in battle. If the Prophet is the speaker, the particle {לי} li, is redundant, but if the words be referred to God, we know that the people were in such a way under the government of God that he calls the widows his, as he calls the children his who were born Israelites. But in this there is no great importance, only that if we consider God to be speaker the sense will be this, ``Behold, it is by no means unknown to me how numerous his widows are: as then I am merciful I have not heedlessly and without reason suffered such slaughters among the people.'' The Prophet intended to shew that so great was the obstinacy of the Jews that they struggled against all the judgments of God; and it is a proof of dreadful impiety when men rush on heedlessly and pay no attention to any punishments. And this is what the Prophet means when he says that the widows were multiplied. And he adds, More than the sand of the sea This was surely a strange thing; so many slaughters were presented to their view that their great perverseness might become more evident, and yet he says that they were not moved.

What follows must be applied to God, I have made to come to them, on the troop of youths, a waster [392] This is an explanation of the former clause, as though he had said, ``The reason why there are so many widows is, because God has destroyed all the men.'' As the Jews might have ascribed this to their enemies, God declares that he was the author of all the slaughters which they had suffered. He then shews that these slaughters were not fortuitous as men suppose who think that fortune prevails mostly in war, for they do not ascribe so much to the wisdom and valor of men as to fortune, being ignorant of the Providence of God. Here then God shews that the whole of the flower of the people had been indeed cut off by the swords of enemies, but that the Chaldeans or the Assyrians had not come of their own accord, or by an impulse of their own, but by a hidden impulse, and that of God, who had resolved to punish that irreclaimable people. This then is the reason why God not only speaks of a waster, but also intimates that the enemies were impelled by his influence, and carried on the war as it were under his banner, authority, and guidance.

He says, at mid-day, even when the Jews might have exercised greater watchfulness. But he shews that he was against them, for they were not taken by the craft of their enemies, as had often been the case, nor were they surprised by secret designs, but their enemies attacked them openly and boldly, even at the time when many of their cities were fortified, and the people thought that they had sufficient defences. As the enemies then dared to assail them in the middle of the day, (for such is the meaning of the Hebrew word) and during the clearest light, it was certainly a

[392] This rendering is the Targum; "the mother (and) the youths," is the Septuagint; "the mother of a youth," the Vulgate; "both mother and youths," the Syriac; "the mother and the youths," the Arabic, Junius and Tremellius, Piscator, and Gataker take the "mother" for the chief city, the metropolis, and consider the "youth," or "the chosen one," to be the "waster," signifying Nebuchadnezzar, — "And I will bring to them, against the mother-city, a chosen one, a waster at mid-day." So Blayney substantially, only he renders the verb in the past tense. — Ed.

fuller proof of God's vengeance; for under such a circumstance the contrivance and counsel of men were not so evident, but the hand of God, which he stretched forth from heaven as it were in an open and visible manner.

He afterwards adds, And I have cast, or caused to fall, upon them suddenly; some say, the city; others, the enemy; and {עיר} oir, means a city, and sometimes an enemy; but another explanation seems more probable, that God had sent on them a tumult and terrors, for the word {עיר}, oir, conms from the verb {עור}, our, which signifies to excite. It may therefore be taken for tumult, and this sense I prefer, for they who render the word city, are constrained to adopt a forced and far-fetched explanation, ``To fall have I made suddenly the city,'' that is, cities, ``upon them.'' There is first a change of number, and then, to fall have I made cities, that is, the ruins of cities, upon them, seems an unnatural phrase; but the sense would be most suitable were we to render the word tumult, for what immediately follows is, and terrors Some however render the word {בהלות}, belut, adverbially suddenly, and consider that the same thing is said twice. He had said just before, ``I have cast upon her suddenly;'' but now he says, ``hastenings.'' Such is the version, but not suitable, for the two words {עיר} oir, and {בהלות}, belut, are joined together. I therefore give this simple explanation --- that the Jews were suddenly smitten with despair because they thought that their enemies were afar off, and that they had to apprehend no danger. Then it is, suddenly have I sent upon them a tumult and terrors [393] He then adds ---

Jeremiah 15:9

9. She that hath born seven languisheth: she hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down while it was yet day: she hath been ashamed and confounded: and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, saith the LORD.

9. Debilitata est quae peperit septem, et expiravit anima ejus (alii vetrunt, afflicta fuit, sed {נפה} significat sufflare; viderut autem hic metaphorice poni pro expirare: expiravit ergo anima ejus;) ingressus est sol ejus (hoc est, occidit sol) in adhuc die (id est, cum adhuc esset dies;) confusa est et erubuit: et reliquias ipsorum gladio dabo (ad gladium exportam) coram inimicis ipsorum, dicit Jehova.

He proceeds with his narrative; he says, that fruitful women had been weakened, not as we see to be often the case, for by frequent child --- bearing we know the strength of women is diminished; but here he speaks of the strength which mothers derive from their children; for a numerous offspring is the support of mothers. She then who has many children seems strong, as she is by so many shields defended. As then mothers were wont to place much dependence on their offspring, he says that they were weakened as to their strength when they were bereaved of all their children, as though they had been barren.

He afterwards adds, that the soul, the people, had expired; for he speaks not here of women, but of the whole people. For it afterwards follows, Set hath her sun while it was yet day; that is, when prosperity seemed certain, God suddenly

[393] Trembling and haste, ({σπουδην},)'' is the version of the Septuagint; ``tumult and trembling,'' of the Syriac; ``terror and trembling,'' of the Arabic; the Vulgate retains only the word ``terror.'' Various have been the explanations of the word ,{עיר} which Calvin renders ``tumult,'' consistently with the general tenor of the ancient versions. Gataker renders it ``watcher;'' Blayney, ``enemy;'' and others ``city;'' but the most suitable to the passage is ``tumult,'' or commotion. --- Ed

involved them in adversity, and as it were surrounded them with darkness, when they thought that prosperous fortune was slhining on them. He at last says, that they were confounded and ashamed; and at the same time he declares, that he would give all who remained to the sword before their enemies; as though he had said, ``They have not yet suffered all the punishment allotted to them, for they are not subdued, though I have heavily and severely chastised them; as then they are incurable, the sword shall destroy the remainder; for my vengeance shall not cease to pursue them, until I shall utterly consume them. [394]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that we may not by our hardness so provoke thy judgment against us, as to constrain thee with an armed hand to assail us; but may we through a meek and submissive spirit be so influenced by thy threatenings as to anticipate that vengeance, by which we see that all the reprobate and the perverse have been visited; and may we so endeavor by true repentance to obtain thy favor, that we may receive thy daily blessings and benefits, until we shall at length come to the full and real enjoyment of all those blessings, which have been laid up for us in thy celestial kingdom, through Christ, our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Sixtieth

Jeremiah 15:10

10. Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me.

10. Hei mihi! mater, mea, quod genueris me virum rixae et virum litis toti terrae: non foeneratus sum et non foenerati sunt mecum; quisque maledicit mihi.

The Prophet, when he saw that his labor availed nothing, or was not so fruitful as he wished, no doubt felt somewhat like a man, and shewed his own weakness. It must however be observed, that he was so restrained by the secret power of the Holy Spirit, that he did not break forth intemperately, as is the case with many; but, he kept the right end so in view, that his sorrows had ever a regard to his object, even to render his labor useful to the people. A clear example of which is seen in these words.

But he addresses his mother, as though he counted his own life a curse; what does this mean? ``Why,'' he says, ``hast thou begotten me, my mother? Woe to

[394] The whole passage, including the 7th, 8th, and 9th verses (Jeremiah 15:7-9) presents difficulties as to the time intended. The verbs, from the middle of the 7th to the last clause in verse the 9th, are all in the past tense, and are so given in the Septuagint, Vulgate, and the Targum; but in the Syriac in the future tense. Our version is not uniform. It is better to give the tenses as they are, for the reference seems to be to God's past judgments; and at the end of the 9th verse, God speaks of what he would do, — 7. And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land. I have bereaved, I have destroyed my people; From their ways have they not turned: 8. Increased to me have their (people) widows More than the sand of the sea; I brought on them, on the mother of they youth, A disaster at mid-day; I caused to come upon her suddenly Tumult and terrors: 9. Languish did she who gave birth to seven, Pant for breath did her soul, Set did her sun during the day time, Ashamed has she been and confounded: And the remainder of them to the sword will I give, In the presence of their enemies, saith Jehova. As he speaks of bereavement, of widows, and of giving birth to seven, it seems evident, that "the mother of the youths," or of young men. Whether mother is to be taken here metaphorically for Jerusalem, is another question; but I think otherwise. The loss of mothers as to their children is what is spoken of. And from having mentioned the case of mothers in their bereavement, the Prophet in the next verse refers to his own mother, and to his own unhappy condition, — Ed.

me, that I have been born a man of strife and of contention!'' We learn from these words, that the Prophet was not so composed and calm in his mind, but that he felt angry when he saw that he effected less than he wished; and yet it is evident from the context, that all this was expressed for the benefit of the public, even that the Jews might know, that their hardness of heart in despising God's devoted servant, yea, in maliciously opposing him, would not turn out to their benefit. This is the purport of the whole.

He calls himself a man of strife, not only because he was constrained to contend with the people, for this he had in common with all prophets. God does not send them to flatter or to please the world; they must therefore contend with the world, for no one is brought to a right state, so as to undertake the yoke of God winingly and submissively, until he is proved guilty. Hence men will never obey God, they will never submit to his word, until they know that they are in a manner condemned; and for this reason have I said, that this evil is common to all prophets, --- that they have to contend with the world. But Jeremiah calls himself a man of strife and contention, because he was slanderously spoken of throughout Judea, as one who through his moroseness drove the whole people to contentions and strifes. This then is to be referred to the false judgments formed by the people; for there was hardly any one who did not say that he was a turbulent man, and that if he was removed, there would have been tranquinity in the city and throughout the whole land. The same objection is at this day made by the enemies of the truth and godliness; they say, that we needlessly create disturbances, and that if we were quiet, there would be the most delightful peace throughout the whole world, and that dissensions and strifes arise only from us, that we are the fans by which the whole world is kindled into contentions. It was then for this reason that Jeremiah complained that he was born a man of strife and contention; not that he was contentious --- not that that he gave any occasion to the people to speak so slanderously of him; for the subject here is not respecting the character of the Prophet, as he knew that his courage was approved by God; but as he saw that he was urged and charged with these false accusations, he calls himself a man of strife and a man of contention; the last word is from {דון}, den, which means to contend.

But as to the exclamation respecting his mother, I have already reminded you that it was an evidence of an intemperate feeling; for had he spoken in a composed state of mind, what had he to do with his mother, so as to make her an associate in the evil he complains of? He indeed seems to ascribe a part of the blame to his mother, because she had given him birth. Now this appears unreasonable. But it may at the same time be easily gathered, that the Prophet was not led away by so great a vehemence, except for the sake of promoting the public good, and that it was for this end that he uttered his complaint; for it was not his purpose to condemn his mother, though at the first view it appears so; but though she was innocent, he still shews that he was unjustly loaded with such calumnies, as that he was a man of strife and contention; as though he had said, ``Enquire of my mother, who hath begotten me, whether I was contentious from the womb? has my mother been the cause why ye say that I am a turbulent man and the author of strifes? Doubtless nothing

can be imputed to my mother; and I am as innocent as she is.'' We now then see that the Prophet indirectly condemns the wickedness of the people, because they calumniated him, as though he moved tumults and strifes through the whole land; and this he more fully confirms by the words which follow: ---

I have not given on usury, nor have they borrowed of me on usury; [395] yet every one curses me He shews here that it was not for a private reason that he was hated by the whole people and loaded with calumnies: for whence come hatreds, and strifes, and complaints, and quarrels, and contentions among men, except through unfair dealing in their intercourse with one another? When, therefore, every one is bent on his own private advantage, he in bears anything to be taken from him. It is indeed a rare thing in the world, that they who carry on business with one another are really friends, and that they wholly approve of each other's conduct; for, as I have already said, covetousness so prevails, that justice and equity disappear among most men. Hence the Prophet says, that he had not lent on usury Under one kind he includes all transactions of life, as though he had said, Je n'ay point traffique, I have had no contention about money affairs, for I have neither lent nor borrowed money, so that I have had no contention with the people on a private concern, nor have they quarrelled with me as though I had injured them or defrauded them, as though they had suffered any loss on my account: yet they all curse me.'' [396]

We see that the Prophet here testifies that he had not incurred the displeasure of the people through his own fault, or on account of any private concern, but because he had faithfully discharged his duty to God and to his ChurJeremiah He then brings against the people a most awful accusation, that they carried on war, not with a mortal man, but rather with God himself. We now understand what the Prophet had in view.

But all faithful teachers are here reminded, that if they perform their office strenuously and wisely, they will surely be loaded with many calumnies, and be called tumultuous, or morose, or disturbers of the peace. They ought then to be fortified against such stumbling --- blocks, so that they may persevere in the course of their calling. They ought at the same time to take heed lest they create enemies through any private concerns. For when the pastors of the Church abstain from every public business, yet when they contend, as they ought with the world, all immediately cry out that they are contentious and turbulent; but if the other be added, if they quarrel with this or that man about worldly things, then it cannot be but that the word of God will be evil spoken of through their fault. Hence great care ought to be taken that those who sustain the office of public teaching should not engage in worldly business, and be thus exposed to the necessity of contending about worldly things: they have enough to do, and more than enough, in the warfare in which the Lord has

[395] Not one of the versions, except the Vulgate, mentions "usury," and Parkhurst says that the verb does not include the idea. Then the rendering ought to be, I have not lent, nor have they lent to me. There had been no money transactions between them, which are commonly the causes of disputes and contentions. — Ed.

[396] Literally it is — The whole of it (the land) is reviling (or cursing) me. As there is something anomalous in the form of the participle, Blayney proposes an emendation, and thinks the right reading to be {קללונו, כלהם} ``All of them curse me.'' The versions and the Targum favor this reading, which is also adopted by the commonly too venturous Houbigant, and approved by Horsley, one equally venturous and bold. By dropping the ,{ו} as in many copies, the anomoly is removed. --- Ed

engaged them.

Now when the Prophet says that they all cursed him, it was a sad instance of impiety; for he speaks not of heathens but of the seed of Abraham. There was no Church then in the world but at Jerusalem, and yet the Prophet was regarded there as contentious and a man of strife. It ought not then to appear strange to us, that not only professed enemies of Christ load us with reproaches, but that they also curse us who deem themselves to be members of the ChurJeremiah It now follows ---

Jeremiah 15:11

11. The LORD said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction.

11. Et dixit Jehova, si non reliquiae tuae in bonum, si non occurrere fecero tibi in tempore mali, et in tempore afflictionis (vel, angustim) hostem.

God at the beginning of this verse no doubt intimates that he would be propitious to his servant, and grant him what he asked. We then conclude that the Prophet's prayer was heard; and hence also becomes manifest what I have stated, that the Prophet was not so led away by the force of grief, but that he chiefly regarded the benefit of the people. God then was so propitious to his request, that he said that it would be well with his remnant, that what remained would be blessed.

Interpreters differ as to the second clause: some apply what is said to the people, I will make the enemy to meet thee in the time of evil, and in the time of trouble: and so they take this view, that God at the beginning of the verse answers the Prophet, and intimates that his request was accepted, so that there would be a better and happier end than what then appeared; and they think that God then turns his discourse to the people, ``With regard to you, I will make the enemy to meet you in the day of affliction.'' But this explanation seems forced. I prefer to regard the whole verse as addressed to the Prophet. God promises first that his remnant would be prosperous; and by remnant he means the remaining time or the end of life, as though he had said, ``I will at length have pity on thee, so that the things which cause thee the greatest grief shall turn into joy: thine end then shall be more prosperous than thou thinkest.'' Then the words which follow confirm the previous sentence: for the Prophet might have objected and said, ``Then either the people shall be delivered from all trouble, or I shall not escape a part of the calamity.'' To this God replies and says, ``Thou and others nmst suffer many things, but I will make the enemy to meet thee, that is, I will make the enemy to be propitious to thee, and even of his own accord to anticipate thee.

Interpreters differ still farther respecting the verb {הפגעתי} epegoti; some regard it in a transitive sense, ``To meet thee will I make the enemy;'' others render the sentence thus, ``I will meet the enemy for thee,'' or, ``I will cause the enemy to ask for thee.'' The verb, {פגע} pego, means sometimes to meet, either in a good or bad sense; as when one goes as an enemy against another, he is said to meet him; or, when one offers help and shews kindness to another, he is said to meet him. But the word has another meaning, and signifies sometimes to ask, and so some take it here, ``I will cause the enemy to ask for thee.'' But this is far --- fetched: God did not send messengers to pacify the Babylonians towards his servant Jeremiah. I prefer

to render the words thus, ``I will meet the enemy for thee,'' or, ``I will cause the enemy to meet thee;'' that is, ``I will pacify him by my secret influence, so that he will of himself spare thee and treat thee kindly.'' And we know that it so happened; for Jeremiah was loosed from his chains and was allowed his liberty, so that he was permitted to go wherever he wished. As then the enemies treated him with so nmch kindness, it appears evident that what God had before promised was fulfined.

As to the main thing intended, there is no ambiguity in the words: God promised that the latter end of Jeremiah would be happy, and that though he was to suffer somewhat in the common calamity of the whole people, yet the enemy would treat him kindly, so that his condition would be better and more desirable than that of others. [397]

But why did Jeremiah make this public? why did he give this description? why did he commit it to writing? even that the Jews might understand that they who harassed him, when he had done them no injury, dealt unjustly with him. They had indeed been excited by him, but it was through what his office required, for he could not deny obedience to God. Jeremiah then made public what God only knew before, that he might produce an impression on them, provided any hope of repentance yet remained. And for the same reason also was the promise of God added; for the Jews ought to have been terrified, when they saw that such an end was promised by God to the Prophet; for what must have happened to them, except the curse of God to the utter-most? We hence see, that in the complaint of the Prophet, and in the answer given by God, the salvation of the people was regarded; for the complaint contains a most severe reproof and the answer of God threatens a most dreadful judgment to the rebellious people. It follows ---

Jeremiah 15:12

12. Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?

12. An conteret ferrum ferrum ab aquilone et aes (vel, chalybem?)

This verse also has been taken in different ways by interpreters: some take the word iron, when repeated in a different case, ``Will iron break iron?'' but others think the subject wanting in the clause, and consider people to be understood, ``Will the Jews break the iron, even the iron from the north, and not only the iron but the brass also, or, the the brass mixed with iron?'' There is in reality no difference, but in words only. If we read, ``Will the iron break the iron from the north?'' the meaning will be, ``Though there be great hardness in you, can it yet break that which is in

[397] This verse, and the three which follow, have caused considerable variety of opinion. Some, like Calvin, Grotius, Henry, and Scott, apply this to the Prophet and the rest to the people; but others, as Blayney, consider the whole as addressed to the people. But what appears the most probable is, that the Prophet is addressed, and in the 11th and 12th (Jeremiah 15:11-12) verses personally, and then as identified with the people in verses the 13th and 14th (Jeremiah 15:13-14). There is no change of person, and this makes it difficult to regard two parties as addressed. This verse, the 11th, is in the past tense and not in the future, and may be thus rendered, — Jehovah said, — Has not thy ministry been for good? Have I not interposed for thee in the time of evil, And in the time of distress, with the enemy? There are various readings for the word I render "ministry," which Parkhurst thinks comes from {,{שרת to serve. Very few readings favor the word which means a remnant,'' and of the versions the Vulgate alone. The reading mostly countenanced (19 MSS.) is ,{שרותיך} derived from ,{שרה} to loose, or to let go, ``Have I not happily let thee go?'' In this case {לטוב} must be rendered adverbially, happily, or fully. Blayney's version is, --- Have I not brought thee off advantageously? But the most natural meaning is what Parkhurst proposes, which is approved by Horsley, only he renders the sentence in the past tense, ``Is not thy ministry for good?'' while the only verb in the verse is in the past tense, and so ought this clause to be. --- Ed.

the Assyrians? but ye are not equal to them: make your strength as great as you please, still the Chaldeans will be harder to break you; for if ye are iron, they are brass or steel, and so it will not be possible for you to sustain their violent attacks.''

As the meaning of the Prophet is sufficiently evident, I will not insist on words, though the rendering I most approve is this, ``Will iron break the iron (the repetition is emphatical) from the north and the brass?''

We here also see that the design of the holy man was, to divest the Jews of that false confidence in which they boasted: for how was it, that they were so refractory, except that they did not dread any misfortune? As then they were secure, predictions had but little weight with them. Hence the Prophet, in order to beat down this ferocity, says, that there would be greater hardness in the Chaldeans, for they would be like iron, yea, and steel also. [398] It follows ---

Jeremiah 15:13

13. Thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoil without price, and that for all thy sins, even in all thy borders.

13. Opes tuas et thesauros tuos in direptionem dabo, non in permutatione (hoc est, absque pretio,) et propter omne scelus tuum, et propter omnem finem tuum (vel, terminum tuum, in omnibus terminis tuis, ad verbum; sicuti etiam in omnibus sceleribus.)

But, there is a difference among interpreters as to the word {גבול} gebul. I indeed allow that it means a border: but Jeremiah, as I think, when he intended to state things that are different, made use of different forms of speech; but as the construction is the same, I see not how the word can mean the borders of the land. I hence think that it is to be taken here metaphorically for counsels; as though he had said, ``On account of all thy wicked deeds and on account of all thy ends, that is, of all thy counsels, I will make thy wealth and thy treasures a plunder.'' For true is that saying of the heathen poet,

There is something where thou goest and to which thou levellest thy bow. [399]

When we undertake any buiness, we have some end in view. Then the Prophet calls their adulteries, frauds, rapines, violencies and murders, wicked deeds; but he calls their counsels, borders, such counsels as they craftily took, by which they manifested their depravity and baseness.

Then, in the first place, he declares that God would be a just avenger against their wicked deeds, and against all the ends which the Jews had proposed to themselves; and at the same time he points out and mentions the kind of punishment they were to have, --- that the Lord would give for a plunder all their wealth and treasures, and that without exchanging; some read, ``without price,'' and consider the meaning to

[398] If we consider what is said to the Prophet in Jeremiah 1:18, and in the twentieth verse of this chapter (Jeremiah 15:20), we shall see the meaning of this verse: he was no doubt the iron and the brass: and the opinion of Blayney is probable, that the "enemy" in the previous verse (which is a poetical singular for the plural enemies) is the nominative case to the verb "break." God, having before refered to what he had done for the Prophet, now says, — Can he break the iron, The iron from the north and the brass? God had made him an "iron pillar, and a wall of brass:" and he asks now, was it possible for his enemies to destroy him whom God had thus made. The hardest iron came from the north of Judea. The future tense is to be read here potentially. — Ed.

[399] Est aliquid quo tendis et in quod dirigis arcum. — Per. Sat. iii. 60.

be, --- that the Jews would be so worthless, that no one would buy them: but this is too refined. I doubt not but that the Prophet intimates, that whatever the Jews possessed would become a prey to their enemies, so that it would be taken away from them without any price or bartering; as though he had said, ``Your enemies will freely plunder all that you have without any permission from you, and will regard as their own, even by the right of victory, whatever ye think you have so laid up as never to be taken away.'' [400] He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 15:14

14. And I will make thee to pass with thine enemies into a land which thou knowest not: for a fire is kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon you.

14. Et transire faciam ad hostem in terram quam non cognoscis; quia ignis ascensus est in ira mea (alii vertunt, in nare; {יפא} significat utrunque) super vos ardebit.

He pursues the same subject. He had said, that they would be exposed as a prey to their enemies, so that all their wealth would be plundered with impunity: he now adds, I will deliver you to the enemy, that is, I will give you into the hands of your enemies, that they may remove you ejsewhere. He afterwards mentions a circumstance, which must have rendered exile much worse; for when any one changes his place and is not led to a distance, the evil is more tolerable; but when any one is carried beyond the sea, or into distant lands, there is a much greater cause for sorrow, as there is no hope of return to one's own country. Then despair increases the grief. Add to this, that not to hear of one's native land, as though we were in another world, is also a bitter trial.

The Prophet then adds, Because fire has been kindled in my wrath, and against you it shall burn He means that God would be implacable until they were consumed; for his wrath had been kindled on account of their perverse wickedness.

Now all these things were foretold to them, that they might know that God would execute a just vengeance by making the Chaldeans their conquerors: for they might have thought that this happened by chance, according to what has been said by heathen writers, that the events of war are uncertain, that Mars is indifferent (Cicero in Epist) Thus they ascribe to chance whatever happens through God's providence. That the Jews then might know that they were chastised by God's hand and by his just vengeance, it was necessary that this should have been declared to them: and therefore he speaks now of the Chaldeans and then of God himself, whose agents the Chaldeans were, for they were guided by his hand. He said before, ``Will iron break the iron from the north?'' This we, have explained of the Chaldeans: but now he turns to God himself, the author of the calamity brought on the Jews: for the Chaldeans could have done nothing, except through his guidance and direction.

[400] This verse and the following are said by Horsley to be "very obscure:" and there seems to be no way of understanding them, except we regard the Prophet as classed with the people; and the conclusion of verse fourteenth (Jeremiah 15:14) favors the idea, "On you, {,עליכם} it shall burn.'' The Prophet himself did not wholly escape the evils which came on the people. Then this verse and the following I would render thus, --- 13. Thy wealth and thy treasures for spoil will I give, Not for a price, but for all thy sins, Even in all thy borders; 14. And I will make thine enemies to pass To a land thou knowest not; For a fire has been kindled in my wrath, On you it shall burn. The ``enemy'' before is now ``enemies.'' The verb ``make to pass,'' has various readings, owing evidently to the similarity of two letters. The versions, except the Vulgate, have ``I will make thee to serve thine enemies;'' but the received text is the most suitable to the passage. Blayney's rendering is, --- I will cause them to pass with thine enemies --- By ``them'' he understands ``thy wealth and thy treasures;'' but this sort of construction can hardly be admitted; and it seems incrongruous. --- Ed.

Hence he says, I will cause them to pass over to the enemy, even to a land which they know not And the reason which follows ought to have availed to check all their complaints. We indeed know how clamorous the Jews were, for they often accused God of cruelty, as it appears from many passages. The Prophet then, in order to restrain them, says, that the fire of God's wrath had been kindled, and that it could not be extinguished, but would burn on them, that is, would entirely consume them. At the same time he condemns their obstinacy, for they allowed no place to God's mercy, though often warned. They might indeed have pacified him, had they repented. Hence the Prophet here condemns their sottishhess; for they increased their judgment by a continued progress in their evil ways. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 15:15

15. O LORD, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy longsuffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke.

15. Tu nosti, Jehova; recordare mei, et visita me, et ulciscere me a persecutoribus meis, ne in prorogatione (vel, protractione) irae tuae tollas me; cognosce sustinuisse me (id est, quod sustinuerim) propter to opprobrium.

The Prophet again turns to God, to shew that he had to do with the deaf. This breaking off in the Prophet's discourse has much more force than if he had pursued regularly his subject. Had he spoken calmly and in uniform order to the people, his address would have been less forcible, than by speaking to them as it were angrily and by severely reproving them, and then immediately by turning from them and addressing God as though bidding adieu to men. Of this we have spoken elsewhere, but it is well to remind you of what we have before noticed. We now perceive the design of the Prophet, in thus abruptly turning from the people to God, and then again from God to the people, even because he indignantly bore the loss of his labor, when the ears of almost all were closed, and when they had become so hardened that they had no fear of God, nor any regard for his teaching. As then the Prophet indignantly bore so great a wickedness, he could not but speak in a hasty manner.

According to this strain, he now says, Thou knowest, Jehovah; remember me, and visit me, and avenge me of mine enemies The Prophet, however, seems here to have been more angry than he ought to have been, for revenge is a passion unbecoming the children of God. How was it, then, that the Prophet was so indignant against the people that he desired revenge? We have said elsewhere that the prophets, though freed from every carnal feeling, might yet have justly prayed for vengeance on the reprobate. We must distinguish between private and public feelings, and also between the passions of the flesh, which keep within no limits, and the zeal of the Spirit. It is certain that the Prophet had no regard to himself when he thus spoke; but he dismissed every regard for himself, and had regard only to the cause of God: for inconsiderate zeal often creeps in, so that we wish all to be condemned of whom we do not approve; and such was the excessive zeal of the disciples, when they said,

``Lord, bid fire to descend from heaven to consume them, as was done by Elias.'' (Luke 9:54)

But it is necessary not only to be moved by a pious zeal, but also to be guided

by a right judgment: and this second requisite was possessed by the Prophet; for he did not let loose the reins to his own zeal, but subjected himself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Since, then, these two things were united, --- a right zeal, to the exclusion of any private feeling, --- and the spirit of wisdom and a right judgment, it was lawful to ask for vengeance on the reprobate, as the Prophet does.

There is further no doubt but that he pitied the people; but he was in a manner freed from the influence of human feelings, and had put off whatever might have disturbed him and led him away from moderation. Though, then, the Prophet was thus emancipated and freed from every kind of perturbation, there is yet no doubt but that he prayed for final judgment on the reprobate; and yet, if there were any healable, he doubtless wished them to be saved, and also prayed anxiously for them.

In short, whenever the prophets were carried away by such a fervor as this, we must understand that they were fined by the Spirit of Christ; and we must know that, when they were thus fined, their whole zeal was directed against the reprobate, while they were at the same time endeavoring to gather together all that could be saved: and the same was the case with David; when he fervently implored destruction on his enemies, he no doubt sustained the person of Christ, as he was fined by his Spirit. (Psalm 35:4-6) Hence he turned and levelled all his vehemence against the reprobate; but, when there was any hope of salvation, David also, in the spirit of kindness, prayed for the restoration of those who seemed to have already perished. Now, then, when the Prophet says, ``Thou knowest, Jehovah; remember me, and visit, me, and avenge me of my persecutors,'' he doubtless does not mean all his persecutors, but those who had been given up and devoted to destruction, and whom he himself knew to be reprobates. [401]

He afterwards shews what he meant by these words --- remember me, and visit me; for he says, Take me not away by deferring So they render the passage, ``Whilst thou bearest with the impiety of this people, and for a time suspendest thy vengeance, let not thy wrath take me away.'' The word {ארך} arek, means to defer, to protract, and also to prolong, to extend, and to continue. Hence this meaning is not unsuitable, ``Take me not away in the protraction of thy wrath;'' that is, ``By protracting thy wrath, not only for one day, but for a long time, take me not away, involve me not in the same destruction with the reprobate.'' David also prayed for the same thing,

``When thou destroyest the wicked, involve me not with them.'' (Psalm 26:9)

The sum of the whole is, that the Prophet asks a favor for himself, that God would make a difference between him and the reprobate while he was protracting his wrath; that is, while he was not only taking vengeance on the impiety of the people for a short time, but also while he was adding calamities to calamities, and accumulating evils on evils, and while thus his fire burned for a long time, until the whole land was consumed: and this is the meaning which I prefer, though all the interpreters agree

[401] There are distinctions here made not allowed by the passage. To pray for vengeance on enemies was in accordance with the covenant made with Abraham, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee," Genesis 12:3. See also Genesis 27:29; Numbers 24:9. As they were the enemies of God's servant for delivering his word, they were the enemies of God himself; and they had already been wholly repudiated by God, and given up to judgment. — Ed.

in another. [402]

It must further be noticed that the Prophet, in this prayer, did not so much consult his own advantage as the good of the people, --- that they might at length dread the dreadful judgment which was at hand. We have already stated how supine a security prevailed throughout Judea; and they also hoped, that if any calamity happened it would be for a short time, so that, having endured it, they might again live in pleasure and quietness. Hence the Prophet speaks of the protraction of God's wrath, in order that they might know, as I have already said, that the fire which had been kindled could not be extinguished until they all perished.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cease not by our sins daily to provoke thy wrath against us, and are also ungrateful to thee and disobedient to thy heavenly doctrine, --- O grant that we may at length know what we have hitherto deserved, and become so displeased with our vices, that being really and from the heart turned to thee, we may above all things seek to be reconciled to thee and received into favor, so that thou mayest rule us by thy Holy Spirit, and confirm us in true obedience and godliness, until we shall at length enjoy that eternal felicity which has been prepared for us in heaven by Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Sixty-First

Jeremiah 15:16

16. Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

16. Inventi sunt sermones tui, et comedi eos, et fuit sermo tuus mihi in gaudium et laetitiam cordis mei; quia invocatum est nomen tuum super me, Jehova Deus exereituum.

The Prophet had said in the last verse that he was loaded with reproach on God's account; for in his intercourse with his own people he did not incur their hatred for any private affair, but for his faithfulness in the discharge of his duty: hence arose their reproaches and slanders. He now confirms the same thing in other words, and at the same time explains what might have appeared obscure on account of the brief statement which he had made. This verse, then, is explanatory; for the

[402] The versions favor another view. The Septuagint omit the verb, and connect "long-suffering" with the previous clause, "Defend me from me persecutors, not in thy long-suffering;" that is, without delay, as the Targum literally expresses it. The Vulgate is, "Do not in thy patience take me;" the Syriac, "Do not according to thy long-suffering bring me out;" the Arabic, "Without delay;" it omits the verb, and connects the words with the former sentence like the Septuagint. The words may be thus literally rendered, — Not in (or, according to) thy long-suffering receive me; that is, under they care and protection: he deprecated delay. This is the purport of all the versions, and also of the Targum. Venema divides the clause, — Let there be no lengthening of thy wrath; receive me; Know that for thee I have borne reproach. Blayney's version is hardly intelligible, — Within the length of thine anger comprehend me not. The meaning of which he says is, "Lengthen not thy resentment as to comprehend me within its limits." Probably the rendering of Cocceius is the best, — Do not through thy long-suffering take me away; that is, "Do not bear long with my persecutors, and thus allow them to destroy me." The verb here used seems simply to take; but it signifies sometimes to take away, and sometimes to take into favor, to take under protection. The most intelligent rendering seems to be as follows: — 15. Thou knowest, Jehova; Remember me, and visit me, And take vengeance for me on my persecutors; Through thy long-suffering towards them take me not away; Know that I have for thee borne reproach. "Take me not away" means "Suffer me not to be taken away." He feared for his life if the vengeance he denounced on the people was not soon executed. See Jeremiah 15:18. — Ed.

Prophet shews what he meant by saying that he was burdened with reproaches and calumnies on account of God's name.

Found, he says, by me have been thy words, and I did eat them, and they turned to me for joy of heart Hence then it was that he was hated by the whole people, because he labored to obey from the heart and in sincerity the command of God, and to perform the office committed to him. But by saying that words had been found, he refers to his calling, as though he had said that he had not sought them as ambitious men are wont to do. We indeed see, with regard to many, that they busy themselves about many things, while they might be at ease and be troublesome to none; but a foolish ambition impels them to seek offices for themselves, and thus they excite against themselves the hatred of many. The Prophet therefore testifies here, that he did not ambitiously seek his office, but that it had been conferred on him from above. We may also take the word in another sense --- that the Prophet felt assured that God had sent him; for the word, to find, is often thus taken in Scripture; that is, when anything is perceived and known it is said to be found. But the former view is what I approve, for it is more simple. Then the Prophet says that he was called and made a Prophet, when he expected no such thing; for when he in no way intruded himself, God met him, and in a manner anticipated him: and this we have seen in the first chapter; for he said, for the sake of excusing himself,

``Ah! Lord, I cannot speak.'' (Jeremiah 1:8)

We hence see that the Prophet sought to decline the office rather than to desire it as a vocation of honor. So he now rightly declares that God's words had been found by him, that is, that they had been gratuitously bestowed on him, according to what the Lord says by Isaiah,

``I have been found by them who sought me not, and I have manifested myself to them who asked not for me.'' (Isaiah 65:1; Romans 10:20)

This indeed is to be applied to all; but as to the meaning of the term, to find, we see how suitable it is. the Prophet then did not hunt for this honor, nor did he desire any such thing, but the favor of God anticipated him.

He afterwards adds, I did eat them He here testifies that he from the heart, and with a sincere feeling, submitted to God's command. We indeed know that many prattle about heavenly mysteries, and have the words of God on their tongues; but the Prophet says that he had eaten the words of God; that is, that he brought forth nothing from the tip of his tongue, as the proverb is, but spoke from the bottom of his heart, while engaged in the work of his calling. Well known and sufficiently common in Scripture is the metaphor of eating. When we are said to eat Christ, (Matthew 26:26) the reference no doubt is to the union we have with him, because we are one body and one spirit. So also we are said to eat the word of God, not when we only taste and immediately spew it out again, as fastidious men do, but when we receive inwardly and digest what the Lord sets before us. For celestial truth is compared to food, and we know by the experience of faith how fit the comparison is. Since then celestial truth is good to feed spiritually our souls, we are justly said to eat it when we do not reject it, but greedily receive it, and so really chew and digest it that it becomes our nourishment. This then is what is meant by the Prophet; for he did not

act a fable on the stage when teaching the people, but performed in real earnest the office committed to him, not like an actor, is the case is with many who boast themselves to be ministers of the word, but he was a faithful and true minister of God. He then says, that the word of God had been to him the joy and gladness of his heart; that is, that he delighted in that word, like David, who compares it to honey. (Psalm 19:11; Psalm 119:103) The same manner of speaking is used by Ezekiel,(Ezekiel 2:8 and Ezekiel 3:1-3;) for the Prophet is there bidden to eat the volume presented to him; and then he says that it was to him like honey in sweetness, for he embraced the truth with ardent desire, and made privately such a proficiency in the school of God, that his labors became afterwards publicly useful. We hence see how similar was the case with Jeremiah and Ezekiel; for they not only recited, as is commonly done by those who seek to please the ear, what they had been taught, but they became the disciples of the holy Spirit before they became teachers to the people. 403

It may however be asked, how could the word of God be so sweet and pleasant to the Prophet, when yet it was so full of bitterness; for we have seen elsewhere that many tears were shed by the holy man, and he had expressed a wish that his eyes would flow, as though they were fountains of water. How then could these things agree --- the grief and sorrow which the holy man felt for God's judgments, and the joy and gladness which he now mentions? We have said elsewhere that these two feelings, though apparently repugnant, were connected together in the Prophets; they as men deplored and mourned for the ruin of the people, and yet, through the power of the Spirit, they performed their office, and approved of the just vengeance of God. Thus then the word of God became joy to the Prophet, not that he was not touched by a deep feeling for the destruction of the people, but that he rose above all human feelings, so as fully to approve of God's judgments. Hosea says the same thing ---

``Right are the ways of the Lord; the just will walk in them, but the ungodly will stumble and fall.'' (Hosea 14:9)

The Prophet indeed speaks thus, not of the word itself, but of its execution; but yet the design is the same; for the Prophet Hosea checks the wantonness of the people, because they complained that God was too rigid and severe. Right, he says, are the ways of the Lord; the just will walk in them, that is, they will consent to God, and acknowledge that he acts rightly, even when he punishes for sins; but the ungodly will stumble, according to what the Lord says in another place ---

``Are my ways perverse and not rather yours?''
(Ezekiel 18:25)

For they said that the Lord's ways were crooked, because they, being soft and delicate, could not endure those severe rebukes, which their own wickedness forced

403 The received text has “thy words.” Calvin has followed the Keri and the ancient versions, as well as our version; but “words” being mentioned in the previous line, the same thing being meant. It is more proper to use “words” here, — And thy words were to me for exultation, And (or, even) for the joy of my heart. It is no objection that the verb, which precedes in Hebrew the noun “words,” is in the singular number; it is the idiom of the language, which is exactly the same in Welsh. “Exultation” is the visible effect; “the joy of the heart” is the inward feeling, the hidden cause. It is common in Scripture to mention the effect first, and to go back to the cause. — Ed.

from the holy Prophets. God answers them, and says, that his ways were not crooked, nor thorny, nor tortuous, but that the fault was in the people themselves.

We now then understand the real meaning of this passage. The Prophet knew that nothing was better than to receive whatever proceeded from God; and he testifies that he found sweetness in God's word.

He afterwards adds, Because on me is called thy name, O Jehovah, God of hosts This mode of speaking occurs often in Scripture, but in a different sense. The name of God is indeed called indiscriminately on all, who are deemed his people. As it was formerly given to the whole seed of Abraham, so it is at this day conferred on all who are consecrated to his name by holy baptism, and who boast themselves to be Christians and the sons of the Church; and this belongs even to the Papists. We are called by his name, because he has favored us with his peculiar grace, for the purity of true and lawful worship exists among us; errors have been removed and his simple truth remains; yet many hypocrites are mixed with the elect of God, so that in a true and well ordered church, the reprobate are called by the name of God; but the elect alone are truly called by his name, as Paul says,

``Let every one who calls on the name of the Lord depart from iniquity,''
(2 Timothy 2:19)

There is in this case a mutual connection; for to call on the name of the Lord, and to have his name called on any one, amounts to the same thing. We hence see that the name of God is only truly and really called on those, who not only boast that they are the faithful, but who have been also regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

But the Prophet here refers to his office when he says, that the name of God was called on him; for he had been chosen to his office of teaching; he was not only dignified with the title, but was really approved by God. We now then perceive in what sense he says that God's name was called on him, even because God had laid his hand on him and resolved to employ him in the work of teaching the people. But there are many mercenaries in the Church, and though they do not openly corrupt or adulterate the truth of God, they yet, as Paul says, preach it for gain, (2 Corinthians 2:17) It must be observed, that God's name was called on Jeremiah, because he was known to God as being true and faithful; and he had not only proved himself to be so to men, but he had been chosen by God to be his faithful messenger. [404]

There is emphasis in the words, O Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the Prophet no doubt refers here to the glory of God, that he might with an elevated mind look down, as it were, on so many adversaries, who proudly despised him, as it was difficult to carry on war with the whole people. This then was the reason why he spoke of God's glory in terms so magnificent, by saying, O Jehovah, the God of hosts It follows: ---

Jeremiah 15:17

[404] The connection of this clasue is variously understood. It cannot be considered as a reason for the previous clause. Gataker, Grotius, and others render {,{כ that, --- ``that thy name was called upon me,'' regarding it as the cause of his joy, that he was called God's prophet. Venema renders it when, which seems more suitable. But on viewing the whole passage, we may justly consider this as a reason for the prayer he offers in the previous verse, so that the latter part of that and the beginning of this verse are parenthetic. I would give this version, --- 15. Thou knowest, Jehonah; Remember me and visit me, And take vengeance for me on my persecutors; Through thy long suffering towards them take me not away; (Know that I have been for thee borne reproach; 16. Found have been thy words and I did eat them; And thy words were to me for exultation, Even for the joy of my heart;) Because called on me has been thy name, Jehovah thou God of hosts. --- Ed.

17. I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation.

17. Non sedi in consilio (vel coetu) derisorum, neque exultavi; propter manum tuam seorsum sedi; quia indignatione replevisti me.

Here the Prophet more fully declares, that he was hated by the whole people because he pleased God. He indeed inveighs against the impiety of those who then bore rule; he does not here so much reprove the common people as the chief men, who exercised authority and administered justice; for when he speaks of the assembly of the ungodly, he no doubt refers to wicked rulers, as the word {סוד}, sud, which means a secret, means also a council. And David (or whosoever was the author of the sixty-ninth Psalm) says, not that he was a sport to the vulgar, but that he was derided by those who sat in the gate, (Psalm 69:12) which means, that he was reproachfully treated by wicked judges, who possessed the chief authority. So also in this place, Jeremiah says, that he did not sit in the council of mockers It is not the same word as in the first Psalm; and {סוד}, sud, is sometimes taken in a good sense, but here in a bad sense; for Jeremiah speaks of the profane despisers of God, who ridiculed everything that was announced in the name of God. [405]

Now it was necessary for the holy man thus to exasperate these impious men, for they were in favor, credit, and authority with the people; and we know that they who were in power do in a manner dazzle the eyes of the vulgar with their splendor. As they then thus deceived the simple, the Prophet removed the mask, and exclaimed, that he did not sit in their council nor exulted with them. In denying that he was connected with them, he intimates what their conduct and manners were. He therefore shews, that whatever their dignity might be, they were still the impious despisers of God, and were only mockers. The same is the case with us at this day, we are under the necessity directly to expose those masked rulers, who are inflated with their own power and fascinate the people; for buffoons in tippling-houses and taverns do not so wantonly mock God as those courtiers, who, while consulting respecting the state of the whole earth, and deciding on the affairs of all kingdoms, seem as though they themselves possessed all the power of God; and we also know that they are profane mockers. Hardly any piety or reverence for God is to be found in the courts of princes; nay, especially at their councils, the devil reigns, as it were, without control. We are therefore constrained often to speak very strongly against such unprincipled men, who falsely assume the name of God, and by this pretense deceive the common people. By this necessity was Jeremiah constrained to declare, that he had not been in the assembly of such men.

He then adds, On account of thine hand (from the presence of thine hand) I sat apart, because with indignation hast thou filled me Here Jeremiah confesses that he had departed from the people; but he did so, because he could not have otherwise

[405] Gataker, and after him Blayney, consider the word, rendered "mockers" by Calvin and our version, as meaning "those who make merry;" and the word is so rendered in our version in Jeremiah 30:19, and Jeremiah 31:4. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Targum, favor this rendering; the Syriac and the Arabic, have "mockers." Then the next line is, — Nor did I exult on account of thy hand. So all the versions connect the words. The "hand" means, as Blayney says, the impulse of the prophetic spirit. See 1 Kings 18:46; Ezekiel 1:3. He did not inconsiderately rejoice on account of his office, because he was made a prophet. — Ed.

obeyed God. Some consider hand to mean prophecy, and others, a stroke; and so it is often taken metaphorically; but I am disposed to take it for command, ``On account of thy hand;'' that is, because I attended to what thou hast commanded, nor had I any other object but to obey thee. Hence, On account of thine hand, because I regarded thee and wished wholly to submit to thy will, I sat apart

This passage is especially deserving of notice; for the Prophet was at Jerusalem among the priests, and was one of them, as we found at the beginning of this book. Though then he was a priest, he was constrained to separate himself and to renounce all connection with his colleagues and brethren. As then this was the case with the holy Prophet, why do the Papists try to frighten us by objecting to us our separation, as though it were a most heinous crime? they call us apostates, because we have departed from their assemblies; truly if Jeremiah was an apostate, we need not be ashamed to follow his example, since he was approved by God, though he separated from the whole people, and also from the ungodly priests. Let us at this day openly and boldly confess that we have separated. There is then a separation between us, and one indeed irreconcilable; and accursed were we, if we sought an union with the Papists. We are therefore constrained plainly and openly to repudiate them, and to move heaven and earth rather than to agree with them. We see that there is a rule here prescribed to us by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Jeremiah. To refute then the ealumnies of those who object to us our separation, this very passage is sufficient.

``I sat apart,'' and true it, was so; but no one can say this at this day; for the Lord has gathered to himself many teachers and many disciples. They then who now profess the gospel do not sit apart as Jeremiah. But though all had forsakert him, he yet hesitated not to separate himself from all. But were it necessary for every one of us to become separated and to live apart, were God to scatter each of us through all the regions of the world, so that no one were to strengthen and encourage another, yet we should still stand firm, under the conviction that we sat apart on account of God's hand. Let the Papists then complain as they please, that we are proud, and that we disturb the peace of the whole world, provided we have this answer to give, --- That we sit apart on account of God's hand, because we seek to obey God and to follow his call: we can therefore boldly and safely despise and scorn all the reproaches with which they falsely load us.

He afterwards adds, For thou hast filled me with idignation [406] He confirms what he said in the last verse, --- that he had eaten the word of God, that he had not been slightly moved, but had been inflamed with zeal for God: for we cannot really execute the commission given to us unless we be fined with indignation, that is, unless zeal for God burns inwardly, for the prophetic office requires such a fervor. He then adds ---

Jeremiah 15:18

18. Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?

[406] "Because all the prophecies thou hast given me are minatory." — Grotius. The meaning may be, "Thou hast filled me with indignant messages." — Ed.

18. Ut quid erit dolor meus fortis, (vel, durus) et plaga mea aegra (aut, valida, aut, insanabilis, doloris plena; dicemus postea de voce,) renuit curari? (hoc est, non admittit remedium:) eris mihi sicut mendacium aquarum non fidelium. (alli vetrunt, eris mihi mendax, aquae infideles, hoc est, tanquam aquae infideles.)

Before we proceed, we shall shortly refer to the meaning of the passage. Jeremiah has before shewn that he possessed an heroic courage in despising all the splendor of the world, and in regarding as nothing those proud men who boasted that they were the rulers of the Church: but he now confesses his infirmity; and there is no doubt but that he was often agitated by different thoughts and feelings; and this necessarily happens to us, because the flesh always fights against the spirit. For though the Prophet announced nothing human when he declared the truth of God, yet he was not wholly exempt from sorrow and fear and other feelings of the flesh. For we must always distinguish, when we speak of the prophets and the apostles, between the truth, which was pure, free from every imperfection, and their own persons, as they commonly say, or themselves. Nor were, they so perfectly renewed but that some remnant of the flesh still continued in them. So then Jeremiah was in himself disturbed with anxiety and fear, and affected with weariness, and wished to shake off the burden which he felt so heavy on his shoulders. He was then subject to these feelings, that is, as to himself; yet his doctrine was free from every defect, for the Holy Spirit guided his mind, his thoughts, and his tongue, so that there was in it nothing human. The Prophet then has hitherto testified that he was called from above, and that he had cordially undertaken the office deputed to him by God, and had faithfully obeyed him: but now he comes to himself, and confesses that he was agitated by many thoughts, which betokened the infirmity of the flesh, and were not free from blame. This then is the meaning.

He says, Why is my grief strong, or hard? He intimates that his grief could not be eased by any soothing remedy. He alludes to ulcers, which by their hardness repel all emollients. And for the same purpose he adds, And my wound weak, as some render it, for it is from {אנש} anesh, to be feeble; and hence is {אנוש} anush, which means man; and it expresses his weakness, as {אדם} adam, shews his origin, and {איש} aish, intimates his strength and courage. Others render the words, ``and my wound full of pain;'' and others, ``strong,'' as he had before called his grief strong. He afterwards thus explains what he meant by the terms he used, It refuses to be healed There is no doubt, as I have already intimated, but that the Prophet here honestly expresses the perturbations of his own mind, and shews that he in a manner vacinated; the wickedness of the people was so great, that he could not so perseveringly execute his office as he ought to have done. [407]

He adds, Thou wilt be to me as the deception of inconstant waters I wonder why some render the words, ``Thou wilt be to me deceptive as inconstant waters.'' The word may indeed be an adjective, but it is doubtless to be rendered as a substantive, ``Thou wilt be to me as the deception,'' and then, ``of unfaithful waters.'' that is, of

[407] It is better to retain throughout the figurative language, — Why has my sore become perpetual, And my stroke incurable, refusing to be healed? He mentions “sore” first, the effect; then the “stroke” which casued it. He refers doubtless to the state of his mind: therefor “the sore” and “the stroke” were the sorrow and the grief which he experienced. — Ed.

such as flow not continually: for faithful or constant waters are those which never fail; as the Latins call a fountain inexhaustible whose spring never dries; so the Hebrews call a fountain faithful or constant which never fails either in summer or in drought. On the contrary, they call waters unfaithful which become dry, as when a well, which has no perennial veins, is made dry by great heat; and such also is often the case with large streams. [408]

We now see the import of this comparison: but the words are apparently very singular; for the Prophet expostulates with God as though he had been deceived by him, ``Thou wilt be to me,'' he says, ``as a vain hope, and as deceptive waters, which fail during great heat, when they are mostly wanted.'' If we take the words as they appear to mean, they seem to border on blasphemy; for God had not without reason testified before, that he is the Fountain of living water; and he had condemned the Jews for having dug for themselves broken cisterns, and for having forsaken him, the Fountain of living water. Such, no doubt, had He been found by all who trusted in him. What then does Jeremiah mean here by saying, that God was to him as a vain hope, and as waters which continue not to flow? The Prophet, no doubt, referred to others rather than to himself; for his faith had never been shaken nor removed from his heart. He then knew that he could never be deceived; for relying on God's word he greatly magnified his calling, not only before the world, but also with regard to himself: and his glorytug, which we have already seen, did not proceed except from the inward feeling of his heart. The Prophet then was ever fully confident, because he relied on God, that he could not be made ashamed; but here, as I have said, he had regard to others. And we have already seen similar passages, and the like expressions will hereafter follow.

There is no doubt but that it was often exultingly alleged that the Prophet was a deceiver: ``Let him go on and set before us the words of his God; it has already appeared that his boasting is vain in saying that he has hitherto spoken as a prophet.'' Since then the ungodly thus harassed the Prophet, he might have justly complained that God was not to him like perennial springs, because they all thought that he was deceived. And we must always bear in mind what I said yesterday, --- that the Prophet does not speak here for his own sake, but raffler that he might reprove the impiety of the people. It therefore follows ---

Jeremiah 15:19

19. Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them.

19. Propterea sic dixit Jehova,, Si conversus fueris, ego quoque convertam te; coram facie mea stabis [hoc est, ut stes coram me) et si separaveris (eduxeris ad verbum, hoc est, si discreveris) pretiosum a vili, tanquam os meum eris: convertan-

[408] The Septuagint and the Vulgate strangely refer to this stroke or the wound in the previous clause, "It has become like the deception of inconstant water:" but the gender of the infinitive added to the verb will not admit of this rendering. It is literally as follows, — Becoming thou hast become like a deceiveer, Like waters which are not constant. The word {אכזב is not substantive, but an adjective, formed like ,{אכזר violent. The quotation from Chardin, made by Blayney, respecting an illusion in the deserts of Arabia, occasioned by the sun's rays on the sand, by which a vast lake appears, is here out of place, as unfaithful or inconstant waters, not unreal, is what is expressed. Calvin's view is no doubt correct. --- Ed

tur ipsi ad te, et tu non convertaris ad eos.

From this answer of God we may gather more clearly the design of the Prophet, for his purpose was, in order more fully to prove the people guilty, to set before their eyes as it were his own perverseness. Had he spoken only according to the heroic elevation of his own mind, so as not to appear touched by any human feeling, they might have derided him as hardhearted or a fanatic, for so we find that the proud of this world speak and think of the faithful servants of Christ. They call them melancholy, they consider them as unfeeling, and as they neither dread death, nor are drawn away by the allurements of this life, they think that all this proceeds from brutal savageness. Had then the Prophet only performed the duties of his office, the ungodly might have derided his insensibility, but he wished to set forth his own infirmity, his sorrows, his fears, and his anxieties, that he might thus lead the Jews to view things aright. This answer of God ought then to be connected with the complaint of the Prophet, and we may hence learn the meaning of the whole.

God gives this answer, If thou wilt be turned, I will turn thee, that thou mayest stand before me It is the same as though he had said, that he was reproved by the Lord because he fluctuated amidst the commotions of the people. A similar passage is found in the eighth chapter of Isaiah. The Lord there exhorts his Prophet to separate himself from the people, and not to connect himself with those who might have often easily disturbed him, because they continued not in his word; then he says,

``Seal my law for my disciples, sign the testimony,''
(Isaiah 8:12, 16)

as though he had said, ``Have now nothing to do with so perverse a people.'' So also now the Lord speaks, If thou wilt be turned, that is, if thou wilt not be guided by the false judgments of the people, nor heed what they say of thee, but boldly despise them and persevere in thy separation from them, I will turn thee, that is, I will by my spirit so strengthen thee, that they may perceive at length that thou art my faithful servant. Then he adds, that thou mayest stand before me. We hence see more plainly what is the meaning of the word ``turn'' in the second clause, even that the Prophet would render his office approved of God, however clamorous the Jews might be; though they even rose up tumulmously against him, yet he says, thou shalt stand before me. There is implied here a contrast in the word ``stand,'' for though the Prophet should be most violently assailed by the false words of men, yet God would support and sustain him. The rest we defer until to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast at this day plainly made known to us thy will through the gospel of thy Son, so that we may by an unshaken faith embrace what is therein set forth to us, --- O grant, that we may learn to be satisfied with thee alone, and to aequiesce in thy truth, and to renounce the whole world, so that we may never be moved by any threats and terrors, nor vacinate when the ungodly seem so proudly disposed to withdraw confidence in thee; but may we render to thee all due honor, so as not only to obey thee but also to perform the offices committed to us, and never to hesitate so to provoke the whole world against us, that howsoever

hard our warfare may be we may firmly persevere in the course of thy holy calling, and may thus at length enjoy that triumph, which Christ thy only-begotten Son hath procured for us. --- Amen.

Lecture Sixty-Second

We began yesterday to explain the passage in which God exhorts the Prophet to be courageous. He indeed uses the word to ``turn,'' but it is the same as though he had said, that it was not wise in him to vacinate, for he ought not to have turned aside by any means from the performance of his office, though the Jews obstinately resisted him. The sum of the whole then is, ``If thou turnest thyself I will also restore thee, that thou mayest stand before me.''

It then follows, If thou wilt distinguish the precious from the worthless, thou shalt be as my mouth God now expresses what sort of turning he required from his servant, even freely to condemn what was vicious, and boldly to defend what was right, though the whole would oppose him. God then indirectly refers to that fear of Jeremiah by which he was so shaken that he knew not what to do. hence God reproves his Prophet, and shows that he could not otherwise stand than by distinguishing between the precious and the worthless. Thus all flattery was to be excluded. God then forbids his Prophet to deal gently with the people, or to be influenced by favor so as to spare their vices, and not to defend what was right with that courage which became him.

In these words is briefly comprehended the duty of a true Prophet, even to turn his eyes from men, to heed neither favor nor hatred, but to fix his attention only on the truth, not only to approve of what is right, but also to defend it at the peril of his life, and further, not to spare vices, but freely to reprove them.

What is added, Thou shalt be as my mouth, some interpret as though it was said, ``Happen to thee shall everything that I have promised,'' or, ``my promise shall not disappoint thee,'' but this seems to be far-fetched. I therefore take this plain meaning, ``I will own thee as a true and faithful servant, if only thou distinguishest what is just from what is unjust, if thou continuest to fight for the truth, and freely reprovest and condemnest vices.'' The import of the passage is, that those only are deemed by God to be the faithful pastors of the Church, who are not influenced by respect of persons, who do not turn to this or to that side, but rightly judge and according to the law of God; for by the law is the difference to be made between the precious and the worthless, as we are no fit judges but as far as we agree with what God has said. The law then is alone that by which we can distinguish the precious from the worthless.

They who keep to this rule, do justly condemn some and approve of others, because they are only God's heralds, and bring nothing of their own. It hence follows, on the other hand, that those are not God's instruments or ministers, nor are worthy of any honor, who so pervert vices and virtues as to say that light is darkness and that darkness is light. We may, in short, conclude from this passage, that a vocation or a title is not sufficient, except, they who are called faithfully discharge their duty to God. It hence follows, that all those who either ambitiously seek the favor of men, or are indulgent to their vices, and by flatteries nourish their corruptions, are

impostors: for how much soever they may boast that they are God's servants, yet he himself declares that they are not to be so accounted.

He then adds, Let them be turned to thee, but be not thou turned to them, or, thou shalt not be turned to them; but the verbs, being in the future tense, are to be taken as imperatives. He now confirms the previous doctrine, --- that he ought not to be submissive to them or to flatter them, but to subdue their perverse minds until they received the yoke of God. The meaning of the words is this, --- that the Prophets were sent for this end --- not to gratify men, or to soothe them by obsequiousness, but to continue firm and constant in executing their office and to turn refractory men to him, and not to concede anything to them. And doubtless, except this course be pursued, the majesty of God must give place to the humours and fancies of men: for we know how great is the pride of almost the whole world, and also their love of pleasure, so that no one can willingly bear to be reproved. As then the greater part of mankind are so proud and self-indulgent, were the word of God to bend to the humor of this or of that man, what would become of it? there would certainly remain in celestial truth no dignity and no majesty.

We now see why this clause was added: for the precious could not be rightly and justly distinguished from the worthless, except the Prophets continued firm in the course of their calling, and carried on war with the perverseness of men. It is therefore necessary that all faithful teachers in the Church should so conduct themselves, as not to concede to the vices of men nor to cherish their fancies, but to constrain them to undertake the yoke of God. Paul, however, seems to have followed a different course, for he says to the Galatians,

``Be ye as I am, for I am as you are.'' (Galatians 4:12)

As then he had endeavored to conform to what they did, and to bear their infirmities, he exhorts them to do the same in return. But it is certain that Paul acted not differently from Jeremiah or other servants of God: and the answer is evident; for Paul in the same Epistle testifies, that if he pleased men, he could not be the servant of Christ, (Galatians 1:10) He then did not hunt for the farours of men, nor turned aside in the least from the course of his duty to render himself obsequious to men; but he could forgive their infirmities, or bear them, so that he might thereby turn them to himself, or rather restore them to the service of God. For when God thus speaks, Be not thou turned to them, he means not Jeremiah personally, but refers to his doctrine. The meaning is, that the truth of God ought not to bend to the will of men; for God changes not, and so his word admits of no change. Whatever then men may expect, this rule must remain fixed and inviolable, that they must submit to God, and that he must be the sovereign, and reduce to submission whatever height

or excellency or pride there may be in the world. [409] It then follows ---

Jeremiah 15:20

20. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

20. Et posui te huic populo in murum aeneum (aeris, ad verbum) munitum: ergo pugnabunt contra te, sed non praevalebunt tibi; quia tecum ego sum ad servandum te et ad liberandum te, dicit Jehova.

As Jeremiah might have objected and said, that the burden was too heavy for him, if he only attempted to break down the contumacy of the people, for he was alone, and we have seen how great was the ferocity and also the cruelty of his adversaries, --- as he might have shunned his commission, it being too much for his strength, hence God comes to his aid and bids him to take courage, for he was fortified by a help from heaven, I have set thee, he says, for a brazen fortified wall to this people The word for ``fortified'' is from {בצר}, betsar; were it {בצרה} betsare, derived from {צור} tsur, to besiege, it would much better suit this place. I know not whether the passage has been corrupted: however, I will not depart from the common reading. As then interpreters agree in this, I will change nothing; and indeed the difference is not very material. [410]

We see then what God meant by these words: As the Prophet was almost alone, and God had bidden him to contend with many and powerful enemies, he promises to stand on his side; as though he had said, --- ``Though thou art defenceless and unarmed, and they are furnished with wealth and great power, thou shalt yet be like a well-fortified city; thou shalt indeed be impregnable, notwithstanding all their assaults and whatever they may attempt against thee.''

But God proceeds lay degrees; for he first declares that his Prophet would be like a brazen and a fortified wall, that is, like an invincible city: for by stating a part for the whole, a wall means a city that is impregnable. It then follows, They indeed will fight against thee. This warning was very necessary; for Jeremiah was doubtless willing to serve God in exercising authority over teachable and humble men, and in gently inducing them to render obedience to God; but he is reminded here that he would

[409] It is extraordinary what shades of difference appear in the expositions of this verse: but a literal rendering would, I conceive, dissipate them, — 19. Therefore thus said Jehovah, — If thou returnest and I restore thee, Before me shalt thou stand; And if thou bringest forth the precious from the worthless, As my mouth shalt thou be; Return shall they to thee, But thou wilt not return to them. The return at the beginning of the verse was from the state of mind in which he was, to an entire submission to God. The future is here used in the sense of the present. The “Precious” was the godly, and the “worthless” the ungodly. The three last lines are promises. See Jeremiah 42:2. Houbigant’s explanation of the fourth line is too refined, though approved by Horsley. He considers that there is an allusion to Judges 14:14. Jeremiah himself was “the worthless” or the mean, being so regarded by the Jews, and “the precious” was the prophetic word. And Horsley renders the line thus, — And if thou wilt bring forth the precious from the mean. He also approves of Blayney’s version of the second line, and considers it as expressive of a prompt execution of what is commanded, — If thou wilt turn as I shall turn thee. But the first verb is in Kal, and the second in Hiphil, and therefore cannot be rendered the same. — Ed.

[410] All the ancient versions are in favor of the common reading, and there are no MSS. favorable to the proposed emendation. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Syriac, and the Targum, render it “strong;” and the Arabic “fortified.” “A strong wall of brass,” is the version of Blayney. — Ed.

have many hard contests with a rebellious people, They will fight, he says, against thee We see how God does not promise ease to Jeremiah, nor gives him a hope of a better lot in future; but, on the centrary, he exhorts him to fight; and why? because the people would not bear the yoke of God, but kindled into rage against him. But another promise follows, They shall not prevail against thee, or overcome thee.

It was indeed necessary for Jeremiah of his own self to disturb the Jews; for nothing would have been more agreeable to them than his silence; and the object of all their attempts was to drive him to despair. But it is not without reason that they are said to fight with him; for it is contrary to nature for men to resist God and to set themselves against him when he invites them to himself; for what can be more natural than for the whole world to hasten to God? It is then something monstrous for men to oppose God, nay, furiously to rise up against hhn, when he kindly calls them to himself. Hence it is that God here makes the Jews the authors of all this disturbance. For since they loaded the Prophet with the most wicked calumnies, as we have seen, and said, that he was a turbulent man and confounded all things by his morosity, God here shews, on the other hand, that all the commotions and the rightings ought to be attributed to them, because they ought to have obediently received the doctrine set before them.

But though this was said only once to Jeremiah, yet the condition of all God's servants is here set before us as in a mirror; for they cannot perform what God commands them without having to encounter many and grievous assaults; for the world is never so prepared to obey God, but the greater part furiously resists, and, as far as it can, stifles the word of God and checks his ministers.

He states the reason, For I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee [411] By these words God exhorts his Prophet to prayer; for we know how dangerous is self-security to all the children of God, and especially to teachers. As then they have at all times need of God's aid, they are to be exhorted to have recourse to solitude and prayer. This is the import of the words which God uses, I am with thee; as though he had said, ``Thou indeed wilt not stand by thyself, or through thine own painstaking, nor wilt thou be a conqueror by carrying on war thyself; but thou must learn to flee to me.'' It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 15:21

21. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.

21. Et liberabo te e manuimpiorum (sceleratorum,) et eruam te e manu (est aliud nomen, sed eodem sensu capitur) fortium.

This verse contains nothing new, but is a confirmation of the promise which we have seen. God had promised to be with the Prophet; he now shews that there was sufficient strength in his hand to deliver him. How much soever then the Jews might

[411] The words here used are remarkably precise and significant. I render the verse thus, — 20. And I will make thee to this people A wall of brass, fortified; And they will fight against thee, But they shall not prevail over thee; For with thee will I be, To save thee and to rescue thee, Saith Jehovah. To “save” was to preserve him from the hands of his enemies; but if he fell into their hands, he would rescue him. And this latter idea is more fully expressed in the following verse, — Yea, I will rescue thee from the hand of the malignant, And free thee from the grasp of the terrible. — Ed.

oppose him, God declares here that he alone would be sufficient to break them down. We hence see that there is more expressed in these words than in what he had said before, I will be with thee to deliver thee; he now shews the act itself as by the finger. I will deliver thee He had promised his aid; he now says, that his aid would be strong enough to deliver him from the hands of his enemies.

He says first, from the hand of the wicked, that the Jews might know that all their disguises would avail them nothing, for they were condemned by the mouth of God. In the second place, he calls them strong, that the Prophet might not be terrified by their power, as was usually the case. For it is very difficult for us not to be disturbed, when we are assailed on every side, and when threats and dangers are in our way. God then here reminds Jeremiah in time, that he would have to fight with the strong and valiant, but that all their strength in opposing him would be unavailing, for divine aid would be much stronger. Now follows ---

Chapter 16

CHAPTER 16

Jeremiah 16:1-4

1. The word of the LORD came also unto me, saying,

1. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad me, dicendo,

2. Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place.

2. Non accipies tibi uxorem, et non erunt tibi filii et filiae in hoc loco;

3. For thus saith the LORD concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land;

3. Quia sic dicit Jehova super filios et super filias, qui nascentur in loco hoc, et super matres, quae pepererint illos, et super patres, qui genuerint illos in terra hac;

4. They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.

4. Mortibus aegritudinum (vel, agrotationum) morientur, non plangentur, et non sepelientur; in stercus (id est, pro stercore) super faciem terrae erunt, et in gladio et fame consumentur (id est, per gladium et famem,) et erit cadaver eorum in cibum volucri coelorum et bestiae terrae

This is a new discourse, which yet is not unlike many others, except in this particular, that the Prophet was not to marry a wife nor beget children in the land But as to the general subject, he repeats now what he had often said before and confirmed in many places. But the prohibition to marry was full of meaning; it was to shew that the people were wholly given up to destruction. The law of man's creation, we know, was this,

``Increase and multiply.'' (Genesis 1:22; Genesis 8:17; Genesis 9:1, 7)

As then mankind are perpetuated by marriage, here on the contrary God shews that that land was unworthy of this common and even general blessing enjoyed by the whole race of man. It is the same as if he had said, ``They indeed as yet live, but a quick destruction awaits them, for I will deprive them of the universal favor which I have hitherto shewed to all mankind.''

Marriage is the preservation of the human race: Take not to thee a wife and beget no children We hence see that in the person of Jeremiah God intended to shew the Jews that they deserved to be exterminated from the earth. This is the import of this prophecy.

It may however be asked, whether the Prophet was unmarried? But this has nothing to do with the subject, for he received this command in a vision; and though he might not have been unmarried, he might still have proclaimed this prophecy, that God had forbidden him to marry and to beget children. At the same time, I think it were probable that the Prophet. was not married, for as he walked naked, and as he carried on his neck a yoke, so also his celibacy might have been intended to be, as it were, a living representation, in order to produce an effect on the Jews. But, as I have already said, we need not contend about this matter. Every one then is at liberty to judge as he pleases, only I suggest what I deem most probable.

But the reason why God forbad his Prophet to marry, follows, because they were all consigned to destruction. We hence learn that celibacy is not here commended, as some foolish men have imagined from what is here said; but it is the same as though God had said, ``There is no reason for any one to set his mind on begetting an offspring, or to think that this would be to his advantage: whosoever is wise will abstain from raarriage, as he has death before his eyes, and is as it were near to his grave.'' The destruction then of the whole people, and the desolation and solitude of the whole land, are the things which God in these words sets forth.

At the same time, they are not threatened with a common kind of death, for he says that they were to die by the deaths of sicknesses He then denounces on them continual languor, which would cause them to pine away with the greatest pain: sudden death would have been more tolerable; and hence David says, while complaining of the prosperity of the ungodly, that there

``were no bands in their death.'' (Psalm 73:4)

And the same thing is found in the book of Job, that

``in a moment of time they descend to the grave,''

that is, that they flourish and prosper during life, and then die without any pain. (Job 21:13) Hence Julius Caesar, shortly before he was killed, called this kind a happy death, ({εὐθανασίαν},) for he thought it a happy thing to expire suddenly. And this is what is implanted in men by nature. Therefore Jeremiah, in order to amplify God's vengeance, says that they would die by the deaths of sicknesses; [412] that is, that they would be worn out by daily pains, and pine away until they died.

[412] More literally, “By the deaths of wastings.” The reference is to the famine and also to the sword. Calvin has followed the Vulgate; “by a pestilential death” is the Septuagint by the death of those who languish by famine” the Syriac; and “by a dreadful death” the Arabic. The “mortal diseases” of Blayney is not proper, for they were not “diseases” but wastings or devastations by the famine and the sword, as stated afterwards. — Ed.

He adds, They shall not be lamented nor buried We have seen elsewhere, and we shall hereafter see, (Jeremiah 22) that it is a proof of a curse when the dead are not buried, and when no one laments their death: for it is the common duty of humanity for relations and friends who survive, to mourn for the dead and to bury them. But the Prophet seems to mean also something further. I do not indeed exclude this, that God would deprive them of the honor of sepukure and of mourning; but he seems also to intimate, that the destruction of men would be so great that there would be none to perform these offices of humanity. For we lament the dead when leisure is allowed us; but when many are slain in war they are not individually lamented, and then their carcases he confused, and one grave is not sufficient for such a number. The Prophet there means, that so great would be the slaughter in Judea, that none would be buried, that none would be lamented. The verb which he uses means properly to lament, which is more than to weep: and we have said elsewhere, that in those countries there were more ceremonies than with us; for all the orientals were much given to various gesticulations; and hence they were not satisfied with tears, but they added lamentation, as though they were in despair.

But the Prophet speaks according to the customs of the age, without approving of this excess of grief. As they were wont not simply to bewail the dead, but also to shew their grief by lamentation, he says, ``Their offices shall now cease, for there will not be graves enough for so many thousands: and then if any one wish to mourn, where would he begin?'' We also know that men's hearts become hardened, when many thus die through pestilence or war. The import of the whole is, that God's wrath would not be moderate, for he would in a manner empty the land by driving them all away, so that there would be none remaining. God did indeed preserve the elect, though as it were by a miracle; and he afterwards preserved them in exile as in a grave, when they were removed from their own country.

He then adds, That they would be as dung on the face of the land He speaks reproachfully of their carcasses, as though he had said, ``They shall be the putridity of the land.'' As then they had by their faith contaminated the land during life, God declares that after death they would become foetid like dung. Hence we learn, as I have before said, that it was an evidence of God's curse, when carcases were left unburied; for as God has created us in his own image, so in death he would have some evidence of the dignity and excellency with which he has favored us beyond brute animals, still to remain. We however know that temporal punishments happen even to the faithful, but they are turned to their good, for the Psalmist complains that the bodies of the godly were cast forth and became food to the birds of heaven. (Psalm 79:2) Though this is true, yet these two things are by no means inconsistent, that it is a sign of God's wrath when the dead are not buried, and that a temporal punishment does no harm to God's elect; for all evils, as it is well known, turn out to them for good.

It is added, By the sword and by famine shall they be consumed; that is, some shall perish by the sword, and some by famine, according to what, we have before seen,

``Those for the sword, to the sword;

those for the famine, to the famine.'' (Jeremiah 15:2)

Then he mentions what we have already referred to, Their carcases shall be for food to the beasts of the earth and to the birds of heaven [413] He here intimates, that it would be a manifest sign of his vengeance, when the Jews pined away in their miseries, when the sword consumed some of them, and famine destroyed others, and not only so, but when another curse after death followed them, for the Lord would inflict judgment on their carcases by not allowing them to be buried. How this is to be understood I have already stated; for God's judgments as to the reprobate are evident; but when the godly and the righteous fall under similar punishment, God turns to good what seems in itself to be the sign of a curse. Though famine is a sign of a curse, and also the sword, yet we know that many of God's children perish by famine and by the sword. But in temporal punishments this modification is ever to be remembered, --- that God shews himself to be a righteous Judge as to the ungodly and wicked; --- and that while he humbles his own people, he is not yet angry with them, but consults their benefit, so that what is in itself adverse to them is turned to their advantage.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou anticipatest us by thy word, so that we may not experience thy eternal severity, --- O grant, that we may become teachable, and be so displeased with our vices, that we may not provoke more and more thy vengeance, but hasten to seek reconciliation with thee, and that relying on the Mediator whom thou hast given us, we may flee to thy mercy, until having been cleansed from all our filth, we shall at length be received into thy celestial kingdom, and there appear before thee in that parity from which we are as yet very distant, and shall enjoy that glory which thine only-begotten Son has obtained for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Sixty-Third

Jeremiah 16:5

5. For thus saith the LORD, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them: for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the LORD, even lovingkindness and mercies.

5. Quia sic dicit Jehova, Ne ingrediaris domum luctus, et ne eas ad plangendum, et ne movearis propter illos; quia abstuli pacem meam a populo hoc, dicit Jehova, clementiam et miserationes.

As Jeremiah was forbidden at the beginning of the chapter to take a wife, for a dreadful devastation of the whole land was very nigh; so now God confirms what he had previously said, that so great would be the slaughter, that none would be found to perform the common office of lamenting the dead: at the same time he intimates now something more grievous, --- that they who perished would be unworthy of any kind office. As he had said before, ``Their carcases shall be cast to the ``beasts of the earth and to the birds of heaven;'' so now in this place he intimates, that their

[413] I would render the fourth verse thus, — By deaths of wastings shall they die; They shall not be lamented, nor buried; As dung on the face of the ground shall they be: Yea, by the sword and by the famine shall they be consumed, And their carcase shall be for meat To the bird of heaven and to the beast of the earth. The latter part is a fuller explanation of what was to take place. “As dung,” so the Syriac; they were scattered like dung. They were to be cast here and there, to be devoured by rapacious birds and beasts. — Ed.

deaths would be so ignominious, that they would be deprived of the honor of a grave, and would be buried, as it is said in another place, like asses.

But when God forbids his Prophet to mourn, we are not to understand that he refers to excess of grief, as when God intends to moderate grief, when he takes away from us our parents, or our relatives, or our friends; for the subject here is not the private feeling of Jeremiah. God only declares that the land would be so desolate that hardly one would survive to mourn for the dead.

He says, Enter not into the house of mourning Some render {מרזה}, merezach, a funeral feast; and it is probable, nay, it may be gathered from the context, that such feasts were made when any one was dead. [414] And the same custom we see has been observed by other nations, but for a different purpose. When the Romans celebrated a funeral feast, their object was to shake off grief, and in a manner to convert the dead into gods. Hence Cicero condemns Vatinius, because he came clothed in black to the feast of Q. Arius, (Orat. pro L. Mur.) and elsewhere he says, that Tuberonis was laughed at and everywhere repulsed, because he covered the beds with goat's skins, when Q. Maximus made a feast at the death of his uncle Africanus. Then these feasts were among the Romans full of rejoicing; but among the Jews, as it appears, when they lamented the dead, who were their relatives, they invited children and widows, in order that there might be some relief to their sorrow.

However this may be, God intimates by this figurative language, that the Jews, when they perished in great numbers, would be deprived of that common practice, because they were unworthy of having any survivors to bewail them.

Neither go, he says, to lament, nor be moved on their account [415] and why? For I have taken away my peace from this people, that is, all prosperity; for under the term, peace, the Jews included whatever was desirable. God then says, that he had taken away peace from them, and his peace, because he had pronounced that wicked nation accursed. He then adds, that he had taken away his kindness and his mercies. [416] For the Prophet might have raised an objection and said, that this was not consistent with the nature of God, who testifies that he is ready to shew mercy; but God meets this objection and intimates, that there was now no place for kindness and mercy, for the impiety of the people had become past all hope. It follows ---

Jeremiah 16:6-7

6. Both the great and the small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried,

[414] The word is of a general import, to cry aloud or to shout, either for grief or for joy: it is here for grief, and in Amos 6:7, for joy. The literal rendering here is, "Enter not the house of shouting." The version of the Septuagint is wide of the mark, "Enter not into their bacchanalian assembly, ({θίασον}.)" The Syriac omits the word, and the Vulgate and Targum have ``feast.'' --- Ed.

[415] The verb means to move, or to nod, either in contempt or in sympathy. The latter is the meaning here: hence to condole is the sense. He was not to go for the purpose of lamenting the dead, or of condoling with the living. To "mourn" is the Septuagint, a word of a similar meaning with the preceding; more correct is to "console," as given by the Vulqate and the Targum. — Ed.

[416] These words are omitted by the Septuagint, but given by the other versions, and are left out in no copies. The "and" before "kindness" is found in two MSS., and in the Syriac, but not in the Vulgate: it seems necessary. The passage I thus render, — For withdrawn have I my peace From this people, saith Jehovah, My mercy also and my compassions. There is here a reason given for the preceding prohibitions: the Prophet was to shew no favor, no kindness to the people, and no sympathy with them: for God had withdrawn from them his "peace," which means here his favor, and also his mercy or his benignity, as some render the word, and his compassions. — Ed.

neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them:

6. Et morientur magni et parvi in terra hac; non sepelient eos, et non plangent super eos, et non incidet se quisquam, et non fiet calvitium illis;

7. Neither shall men tear themselves for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead; neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother.

7. Et non eomplodent (vel, extendent) illis (quidam legentes {צצץ} pro {צצץ} vertunt, non frangent panem; {צצץ} significat frangere, et interdum dividere, vel ostendere, vel dispergere: non dubium est quin Propheta, sicut alio loco vidimus intelligat complosionem manuum, vel contorsionem, ubi in vehementi luctu ita brachia huc et illuc projiciuntur, deinde comploduntur manus: hunc gestum hoc quoque loco exprimit cum dicit, Et non frangent, vel, non complodent manus) ad consolandum (hoc est, ad unumquenque consolandum) super mortuo, et non propinabunt illis calicem consolationum super patre suo et super matre sua

He pursues the same subject: he says that all would die indiscriminately, the common people as well as the chief men, that none would be exempt from destruction; for God would make a great slaughter, both of the lower orders and also of the higher, who excelled in wealth, in honor, and dignity; Die shall the great and the small. It often happens in changes that the great are punished; and sometimes the case is that the common people perish, while the nobles are spared: but God declares, that such would be the destruction, that their enemies would make no difference between the common people and the higher ranks, and that if they escaped the hands of their enemies, the pestilence or the famine would prove their ruin.

He adds, They shall not bury them, nor beat their breast for them; and then, they shall not eat themselves, nor make themselves bald for them [417] This is not mentioned by the Prophet to commend what the people did; nor did he consider that in this respect they observed the command of the law; for God had forbidden them to imitate the corrupt customs of the heathens. (Leviticus 21:1) We have already said, that the orientals were much given to external ceremonies, so that there was no moderation in their lamentations: therefore God intended to correct this excess. But the Prophet here has no respect to the command, that the Jews were to moderate their grief, --- what then? He meant to shew, as I have already reminded you, that the slaughters would be so great, that they --- would cause hardness and insensibility, being so immense as to stun the feelings of men. When any one dies, friends and neighbors meet, and shew respect to his memory; but when pestilence prevails, or when all perish by famine, the greater part become hardened and unmindful of themselves and others, and the offices of humanity are no longer observed. God then shews, that such would be the devastation of the land, that the Jews, as though

[417] The first clause of the verse, as well as the last of the preceding, is omitted in the Septuagint, but retained in the Vulgate, Syriac, and the Targum. The verbs in the next clause ought to be rendered as transitives, — They shall not bury them nor lament for them. Then the two concluding verbs are to he rendered as impersonals, — And there shall be no cutting nor making bald for them. The Welsh is a literal version of the Hebrew, — Ac nid ymdorrir ac nid ymfoelir drostynt. Nothing can be much more literal. The first verb is in Hithpael, and so the Welsh is; for like Hebrew it has a reciprocal form for its verbs. The last verb is also in Welsh in this form; but it needs not be so, for it might be, ac ni foelir — Ed.

callous and hardened, would no longer lament for one another. In short, he shews, that together with these dreadful slaughters, such insensibility and hardness would prevail among the Jews, that no husband would think of his wife, and no father of his children; but that all of them would be so astonied by their own evils as to become like the wild beasts.

He says further, They shall not cut themselves nor pull off their hairs, as they had used to do. These things are mentioned, as they were commonly done; it cannot be hence concluded, that they were approved by God; for God's design was not to pronounce a judgment on their lamentation, on the tearing off of the hair, or on their incisions. It is indeed certain that these practices proceeded from the impetuous feelings of men, and were tokens of impatience; but as I have said, God does not speak here of what was lawful, but of what men were wont to do.

As to that part, where he says, that he had taken away his kindness and his mercies, he does not mean that he had changed his nature, but his object was to cut off occasion from all who might complain; for men, we know, whenever God's hand presses hard on them, to make them to deplore rightly their miseries, are stifficiently ready to say, that God visits them with too much severity. He therefore shews that they were unworthy of kindness and mercies. At the same time he reminded them that there was no reason for hypocrites to entertain any hope, because Scripture so often commends the kindness of God and his mercy; for since they accumulated sins on sins, God could not do otherwise than come to an extremity with them.

With regard to the seventh verse, [418] we may learn from it what I have already referred to, --- that the Jews made funeral feasts, that children and widows might receive some relief to their sorrow; for the Prophet calls it the cup of consolations, when friends kindly attended; they had also some ridiculous gesticulations; for no doubt laughter was often excited by mourners among the Jews. But we see that men vied with one another in lamenting for the dead; for it was deemed a shame not to shew grief at the death of their friends. When tears did not flow, when the nearest relations did not howl for the dead, they thought them inhuman; hence it was, that there was much dissimulation in their mourning; and it was foolishly regarded an alleviation to extend the cup of consolation. But as I have said before, the Prophet here did not point out what was right, but borrowed his words from what was commonly practiced. It follows ---

Jeremiah 16:8

8. Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting, to sit with them to eat and to drink.

8. Et domum convivii ne ingrediaris, ut sedeas cum ipsis ad edendum et ad biben-

[418] Calvin, having in his version explained the beginning of this verse, passes it by here. His rendering is, "And they shall not beat their hands together for them, to console any one for the dead." He omits one word, rendered, "in mourning" in our version. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Arabic and the Targum give another meaning. They must have read {{לחם ``bread,'' instead of {להם} ``for them.'' The difference is so small that we are inclined to think it the true readlng, though there be but two MSS. in its favor. The passage itself seems to require this reading, --- the verb which precedes it, and the correspondence between the former and latter part of the verse --- bread and drink. The verse then would read thus, --- 7. And they shall not divide bread to the mourner, To console him for the dead: Nor shall they give them to drink the cup of consolations, Each one for his father and for his mother. Blayney quotes Jerome, who says, ``It was usual to carry provisions to mourners, and to make an entertainment, which sort of feasts the Greeks call {περιδειπνα}, and the Latin parentalia.'' --- Ed.

dum.

Here the Prophet refers to other feasts, where hilarity prevailed. The meaning then is, --- that the people were given up to destruction, so that nothing was better than to depart from them as far as possible. So Jeremiah is prohibited from going at all to them, so that he might not be their associate either in joy or in sorrow; as though he had said, --- 'Have no more anything to do with this people; if they lament their dead, leave them, for they are unworthy of any act of kindness; and if they make joyful feasts, be far from them, for every intercourse with them is accursed.'' We now then understand why the Prophet spoke of grief, lamentation and mourning, and then mentioned joy. He afterwards adds, ---

Jeremiah 16:9

9. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place in your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride.

9. Quoniam sic dixit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Ecce ego auferens ab hoc loco, coram oculis vestris, et in diebus vestris, vocem gaudii et vocem laetitiae, vocem sponsi et vocem sponsae.

This verse contains a reason for the preceding, --- that every connection with that people would be accursed. Yet he states one thing more expressly, --- that the time was come in which they were already deprived of all joy; for the ungodly, even when God most awfully threatens them, strengthen themselves in their security, hence God intended to give them some presage, that they might before the time know that the saddest calamities were at hand, by which every joy and gladness were to be taken away.

He then says, that the God of hosts and the God of Israel had spoken. He at the same time deprived them of all hope, though he called himself the God of Israel. Hypocrites were wont either to despise the power of God, or to abuse his goodness. Had not God checked them, they would have deemed as nothing what the prophets threatened; and how so? Because they depreciated, as far as they could, the power of God. Hence God says, that he is the God of hosts. But when they could not in their pride and haughtiness throw down, as it were the power of God, then they betook themselves to another asylum; they promised to themselves that he would deal indulgently with them; and thus they deceived themselves. Hence, on the other hand, God calls himself here the God of Israel, in order that they might know, that it was of no avail to them, that he had adopted the seed of Abraham; for they were not the children of Abraham, but aliens, as they had departed from his piety and faith. This served as a preface.

Now when he says, {הנני}, enni, Behold me, he shews that the Jews had no reason to put off the time, and to indulge avain confidence; for vengeance was already come. Behold me, he says, he thus comes forth and testifies that he is already prepared to execute his judgment. Behold me,, he says, taking away from this place, before your eyes, and in your days, etc.; their destruction would happen in a short time and before their eyes. I am taking away, he says, the voice of joy and the voice

of gladness, [419] the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride Here by stating a part for the whole, he intimates that they would become like the dead rather than the living; for the continuance of the human race is preserved by marriage, as in the offspring mankind are as it were born again, who would otherwise perish daily. Since then there was no more time left for marriages, it was a token of final destruction. This is what the Prophet intimates, when he says, that God would cause the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride to cease, so that there would be no more any congratulations. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 16:10-13

10. And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt shew this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? or what is our iniquity? or what is our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?

10. Et erit quum annuntiaveris populo huic omnia verba haec, tunc dicent (vel, si diceret) tibi, Cur loquutus est Jehova super nos omne malum hoe magnum? et quae iniquitas nostra? et quod scelus nostrum, quo scelerate egimus adversus Jehovam Deum nostrum?

11. Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law;

11. Tunc dices illis, Quia dereliquerunt me patres vestri, dicit Jehova, et profecti sunt post deos alienos, et servierunt illis, et adoraverunt illos (vel, sese inflexerunt coram illis,) et me reliquerunt et legem meam non servarunt;

12. And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me:

12. Et vos deteriores fuistis (deterius egistis) ad faciendum, (vel, perpetrandum) quam patres vestri, et ecce vos profecti estis quisque post pravitatem cordis sui mall, et absque audire me (hoe est, ita ut non audieritis me:)

13. Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not shew you favour.

13. Et expellam vos e terra hae ad terram quam non novistis vos et patres vestri, et servietis inie diis alienis die ae nocte; quia non dabo vobis gratiam.

He shews here what we have seen elsewhere, --- that the people flattered themselves in their vices, so that they could not be turned by any admonitions, nor be led by any means to repentance. It was a great blindness, nay, even madness, not to examine themselves, when they were smitten by the hand of God; for conscience ought to have been to them like a thousand witnesses, immediately condemning them; but hardly any one was found who examined his own life; and then, though God proved them guilty, hardly one in a hundred winingly and humbly submitted to his judgment; but the greater part murmured and made a clamor, whenever they felt the scourges of God. This evil, as Jeremiah shews, prevailed among the people;

[419] Rather, "The voice of exultation and the voice of joy;" the most manifest display first — exultation; and then the most hidden feeling — joy. — Ed.

and he shewed the same in the fifth chapter.

Hence it is that God says, When thou shalt declare these words to this people, and they shall say, Wherefore has Jehovah spoken all this great evil against us; what is our iniquity? what is our sin, that he so rages against us, as though we had acted wickedly against him? God no doubt intended to obviate in time what that perverse people might have said, for he knew that they possessed an untameable disposition. As then he knew that they would be so refractory as to receive no reproof, he confirms his own Prophet, as though he had said, ``There is no reason for their perverseness to discourage thee; for they will immediately oppose thee, and treat thee as one doing them a grievous wrong; they will expostulate with thee and deny that they ought to be deemed guilty of so great crimes; if then they will thus petulantly cast aside thy threatenings, there is no reason for thee to be disheartened, for thou shalt have an answer ready for them.''

We now see how hypocrites gained nothing, either by their evasions, or by wantonly rising against God and his Prophets. At the same time all teachers are reminded here of their duty, not to vacinate when they have to do with proud and intractable men. As it appeared elsewhere, where God commanded his Prophet to put on a brazen front, that he might boldly encounter all the insults of the people; (Jeremiah 1:18) the same is the case here, they shall say to thee, that is, when thou threatenest them, they will not winingly give way, but they will contend as though thou didst accuse them unjustly, for they will say, ``What is our sin? what is our iniquity? what is the wickedness which we have committed against Jehovah our God, that he should declare this great evil against us?'' Thus we see that hypocrites vent their rage not only against God's servants, but against God himself, not indeed that they profess openly and plainly to do so. But what is the effect when they cannot bear to be corrected by God's hand, but resist and shew that they do not endure correction with a resigned mind? do they not sufficiently prove that they rebel against God?

But Jeremiah here graphically describes the character of those who struggled with God, for they dared not wholly to deny that they were wicked, but they extenuated as far as they could their sin, like Cain, who ventured not to assert that he was innocent, for he was conscious of having done wrong; and the voice of God, ``Where is thy brother?'' strengthened the voice of conscience, but in the meantime he ceased not to utter this complaint,

``Greater is my punishment than I can bear.''

(Genesis 4:9, 13)

So also Jeremiah introduces the people as speaking, ``O, what is our iniquity? and what is the sin which we have committed against Jehovah our God, that he should speak this great evil against us?'' They say not that they were wholly without fault, they only object that the atrocity of their sins was not so great as to cause God to be so angry with them, and to visit them with so grievous a punishment. They then exaggerated the punishment, that they might obtain some covering for themselves; and yet they did not say that they were innocent or free from every fault, but they speak of their iniquities and sins as though they had said, ``We indeed confess that there is something which God may reprehend, but we do not acknowledge such a

mass of sins and iniquities as to cause him thus to thunder against us.''

But he then says, Thou shalt answer them, Because your fathers forsook me; they went after foreign gods, served and worshipped them; and me they forsook and my law they kept not, and ye have done worse [420] God in the first place accused their fathers, not that punishment ought to have fallen on their children, except they followed the wickedness of their fathers, but the men of that age fully deserved to be visited with the judgment their fathers merited. Besides well known is that declaration, that God reckons the iniquities of the fathers to their children; (Exodus 20:5; Exodus 34:7; Deuteronomy 5:9) and he acts thus justly, for he might justly execute vengeance for sins on the whole human race, according to what Christ says,

``On you shall come the blood of all the godly, from righteous Abel to Zachariah the son of Barachiah.'' (Matthew 23:35; Luke 11:51)

Thus then the Scripture often declares, that children shall be punished with their fathers, because God will at one time or another require an account of all sins, and thus will make amends for his long forbearance, for as he waits for men and kindly invites them through his patience to repent, so when he sees no hope he inflicts all his scourges. It is hence no wonder that children are more grievously punished after iniquity has prevailed for many ages.

We hence see that these two things are not inconsistent --- that God connects the punishment of children with that of their fathers, and that he does not punish the innocent. We indeed see this fulfilled,

``The soul that sinneth it shall die; the children shall not bear the iniquity of their fathers, nor the father the iniquity of his child,'' (Ezekiel 18:4, 20)

for God never blends children with their fathers except they be their associates in wickedness. But yet there is nothing to prevent God to punish children for the sins of their fathers, especially when they continually rush headlong into worse sins, when the children, as we shall hereafter see, exceed their fathers in all kinds of wickedness.

We further learn from this passage, that they bring forward a vain pretense who allege against us the examples of the Fathers, as we see to be done now by those under the Papacy; for the shield they boldly set up against us is this, that they imitate the examples of the fathers. But God declares here that they were worthy of double punishment who repented not when they saw that their fathers had been ungodly and transgressors of the law.

Let us now notice the sins which God mentions: he says, that they had forsaken him. That people could not make any excuse for going astray, like the unhappy heathens, to whom no Prophet had been sent, and no law had been given. Hence the heathens had some excuse more than the Jews. The truth indeed respecting all was, that they were all apostates, for God had bound the human race to himself,

[420] The division of these verses, the 11th and the 12th (Jeremiah 16:11-12), seems incorrect. Were the latter part of the 11th connected with the 12th, the repetition which now appears would not be perceived. I render the verses thus — 11. Then say to them, Because your fathers forsook me, saith Jehovah, And walked after foreign gods, And served them and bowed down to them: Yea, me they forsook and my law kept not, 12. And ye have become evil by doing worse than your fathers; For lo, ye are walking, every man, After the resolutions of his own evil heart, So as not to hearken to me. In the first part their fathers' conduct is set forth; in the second their fathers' conduct and their own. And their "worse" conduct was in not hearkening to the voice of God by his Prophets. — Ed.

and all they who followed superstitions were justly charged with the sin of apostasy; there was yet a greater atrocity of wickedness in the Jewish people, for God had set before them his law, they had been brought up as it were in his school, they knew what true religion was, they were able to distinguish the true God from fictitious gods. We now then see the meaning of the expression, They have forsaken me: and it is twice repeated, because it was necessary thus to prove the Jews guilty, that their mouths might be stopped; for we have seen that they were to be thus roused from their insensibility, inasmuch as they would have never yielded nor acknowledged their sins, were they not constrained.

He says further, that they went after foreign gods, served them, and worshipped them Now this statement enhances again their sins, for the Jews preferred their own inventions to the true God, who had by so many signs and testimonies manifested his glory and made known his power among them. As then God had abundantly testified his power, it was by no means an endurable ingratitude in them to follow strange gods, of whom they had only heard. The heathens indeed vainly boasted of their idols, and spread abroad many fables to allure unhappy men to false and corrupt worship, but the Jews knew who the true God was. To believe the fables of the heathens, rather than the law and their own experience, was not this the basest impiety? This then was the reason why God complained that foreign gods were worshipped by them.

Then he adds, They served and worshipped them The verb to serve is often used by the Hebrews to express worship, as we have stated elsewhere; and thus is refuted the folly of the Papists who deny that they are idolaters, because they worship pictures and statues with dulla, that is, with service, if we may so render it, and not with latria, as though Scripture in condemning idolatry never used this verb. But God condemns here the Jews because they served strange gods, because they gave credit to the false and vain fictions of the heathens; and then he adds the outward action, that they prostrated themselves before their idols.

At the end of this verse he shews how he had been forsaken, even because they kept not his law. He then confirms what I have already stated, that there was on this account a worse apostasy among the Jews, for they had knowingly and wilfully forsaken the fountain of living water, as we have seen in the second chapter: hence simple ignorance is not what is here reprehended, as though they had sinned through error or want of knowledge, but they had rejected the worship of God as it were designedly. The rest I shall defer till to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we in various ways daily provoke thy wrath against us, and thou ceasest not to exhort us to repent, --- O grant, that we may be pliant and obedient and not despise thy kind invitations, while thou settest before us the hope of thy mercy, nor make light of thy threatenings; but that we may so profit by thy word as to endeavor to anticipate thy judgments; and may we also, being allured by the sweetness of thy grace, consecrate ourselves wholly to thee, that thus thy wrath may be turned away from us, and that we may become receivers of that grace which thou offerest to all who truly and from the heart repent, and who desire to have thee

propitious to them in Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Sixty-Fourth

I was constrained yesterday to leave unfinished the words of the Prophet. He said that the children were worse than their fathers, and gave the reason, Because they followed the wickedness of their evil heart, and hearkened not to God He seems to have said before the same thing of the fathers: it might then be asked, Why does he say that the children had done worse than their fathers, and pronounce their sins worse? Now we have already seen that sins became worse before God, when the children strengthened themselves in wickedness by following the examples of their fathers. We must also notice, that not only the law had been set before them, but that also Prophets had been often sent to them, who added their reproofs: and this is what Jeremiah seems to have expressed at the end of the verse, by saying that they hearkened not, though daily spoken to by the Prophets. It was then their obstinacy that God so severely punished: they had imitated their wicked fathers, and then they not only had despised, but also through their obstinate wickedness had rejected all the warnings which the Prophets gave them.

Then follows a commination, I will eject you, he says, or remove you, from this land to a land which ye know not, nor your fathers, for they had followed unknown gods, and went after inventions of their own and of others. God now declares that he would be the vindicator of his own glory, by driving them to a land unknown to them and to their fathers. He immediately adds, There shall ye serve other gods day and night We must take notice of this kind of punishment, for nothing could have happened worse to the Jews than to be constrained to adopt false and corrupt forms of worship, as it was a denial of God and of true religion. As this appears at the first view hard, some mitigate it, as though the worship of strange gods would be that servitude into which they were reduced when they became subject to idolators: but this is too remote. I therefore do not doubt but that God abandoned them, because they had violated true and pure worship, and had gone after the many abominations of the heathens; and thus he shews that they were worthy to be thus dealt with, who had in every way contaminated themselves, and as it were plunged themselves into the depth of every thing abominable: and it is certainly probable that they were led by constraint into ungodly ceremonies, when the Chaldeans had the power to treat them, as they usually did, as slaves, without any measure of humanity. It is then hence a probable conjecture that they were drawn to superstitions, and that interminably; so that they were not only forced to worship false gods, but were also constrained to do so by way of sport, as they daily triumphed over them as their conquerors.

And he confirms this clause by what follows, For I will not, etc., for the relative {אשר} asher, is here to be taken for a causative particle, For I will not shew you favor, or mercy; that is, I will not turn the hearts of your enemies so as to be propitious or kind to you. [421] By these words God shews that he would not only punish them by

[421] The Targum and the versions, except the Syriac, apply this clause to their enemies, "who will not shew you favor," or mercy; and no doubt this reads better; and the verb in that case would be {{יתנו but there is no MS. in its favor. The relative may be regarded in the same way as at the second verse of the first chapter, (To whom the word, etc.,) ``To whom I will not shew favor.'' This kind of idiom evidently exists in Hebrew. However

subjecting them to their enemies, or by suffering them to be driven into exile; but that there would be an additional punishment by rendering their enemies cruel to them; for God can either tame the ferocity of men, or, when he pleases, can rouse them to greater rage and cruelty, when it is his purpose to use them as scourges.

We now then understand the whole design of what the Prophet says, that the Jews who had refused to worship God in their own land would be led away to Chaldea, where they would be constrained, wining or unwining, to worship strange gods, and that without end or limits. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 16:14-15

14. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

14. Propterea ecce dies veniunt, dicit Jehova, et non dicetur amplius (hoc est, quibus non dicetur amplius) vivit Jehova, qui eduxit (ascendere fecit, ad verbum) filios Israel e terra Egypti;

15. But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.

15. Quin potius, vivit Jehova, qui ascendere fecit filios Israel e terra Aquilonis, et ex omnibus regionibus, ad quas expulerat eos; et reducam ad terram eorum quam dedi patribus vestris.

Jeremiah seems here to promise a return to the Jews; and so the passage is commonly expounded, as though a consolation is interposed, in which the faithful alone are concerned. But I consider the passage as mixed, that the Prophet, in part, speaks in severe terms of the dreadful exile which he foretells, and that he in part blends some consolation; but the latter subject seems to me to he indirectly referred to by the Prophet. I therefore think this to be an amplification of what he had said. This is to be kept in mind. He had said, ``I will expel you from this land, and will send you to a land unknown to you and to your fathers.'' Now follows a circumstance which increased the grievousness of exile: they knew how cruel was that servitude from which God had delivered their fathers. Their condition was worse than hundred deaths, when they were driven to their servile works; and also, when all justice was denied them, and when their offspring were from the womb put to death. As then they knew how cruelly their fathers had been treated by the Egyptians, the comparison he states more fully shewed what a dreadful punishment awaited them, for their redemption would be much more incredible.

We now perceive what the Prophet meant, as though he had said, ``Ye know from what your fathers came forth, even from a brazen furnace, as it is said elsewhere, and as it were from the depth of death, so that that redemption ought to be remembered to the end of the world; but God will now cast you into an abyss deeper than that of Egypt from which your fathers were delivered; and when from thence he will redeem you, it will be a miracle far more wonderful to your posterity, so that it will almost extinguish, or at least obscure the memory of the first redemption: It will not then

the sense is the same as given in the ancient versions, only according to the Hebrew reading the original cause of the favor is expressly mentioned. The denial of favor proceeded from God's providence, though it was through the instrumentality of their enemies. --- Ed.

be said any more, Live does Jehovah, who brought the children of Israel from Egypt, for that Egyptian captivity was far more endurable than what this latter shall be; for ye shall be plunged as it were into the infernal regions; and when God shall rescue you from thence, it will be a work far more wonderful.'' This I consider to be the real meaning of the Prophet. [422]

Yet his object was at the same time indirectly to give them some hope of their future redemption; but this he did not do avowedly. We ought then to regard what the Prophet had in view, even to strike the Jews, as I have said, with terror, so that they might know that there was an evil nigh at hand more grievous than what their fathers suffered in Egypt, who yet had been most cruelly oppressed. Then their former liberation would be rendered obscure and not celebrated as before, though it was nevertheless an evidence of the wonderful power of God.

But, it will be rather said, Live does Jehovah, for he has brought his people from the land of the north; and for this reason, because there will be less hope remaining for you, when the Chaldeans shall subdue and scatter you like a body torn asunder, and when the name of Israel shall be extinguished, when the worship of God shall be subverted and the Temple destroyed. When therefore all things shall appear to be past remedy, this captivity shall be much more dreadful than that by which your fathers had been oppressed. Therefore, when God restores you, it will be a miracle much more remarkable. And that the Prophet took occasion to give thom some hope of God's favor, may be gathered from the end of the verse, when he says, And I will make them to return to their own land: but the copulative ought to be rendered as a conditional particle, as though he had said, When I shall restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers It now follows ---

Jeremiah 16:16

16. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

16. Ecce ego mitto ad piscatores multos, dicit Jehova, et piscabuntur; et sic (post haec) mittam ad multos venatores, et venabuntur eos de super omni monte, (hoc est, ex omni monte,) et omni colle, et foraminibus (vel, cavernis) rapium.

Some explain this of the apostles; but it is wholly foreign to the subject: they think that Jeremiah pursues here what he had begun to speak of; for they doubt not but that he had been speaking in the last verse of a future but a near deliverance, in order to raise the children of God into a cheerful confidence. But I have already rejected this meaning, for their exposition is not well founded. But if it be conceded that the Prophet had prophesied of the liberation of the people, it does not follow that God goes on with the same subject, for he immediately returns to threatenings, as ye will see; and the allegory also is too remote when he speaks of hunters and fishers; and as mention is made of 'hills and mountains, it appears still more clearly that the Prophet is threatening the Jews, and not promising them any alleviation in their miseries. I therefore connect all these things together in a plain manner; for,

[422] No particular notice is taken of {{לכן rendered ``therefore,'' at the beginning of the verse. Gataker renders it ``notwithstanding;'' Lowth, ``nevertheless,'' and Blayney, ``after this.'' What suits the passage best is ``nevertheless.'' The verse appears to be parenthetic, introduced for the purpose of keeping the people from despair under their sufferings. --- Ed.

having said that the evil which the Jews would shortly have to endure would be more grievous than the Egyptian bondage, he now adds a reason as a confirmation, ---

Behold, he says, I will send to them many fishers, that they may gather them together on every side. He mentions fishers, as they would draw the children of Israel from every quarter to their nets. He then compares the Chaldeans to fishers, who would so proceed through the whole land as to leave none except some of the most ignoble, whom also they afterwards took away; and to fishers he adds hunters. Some understand by fishers armed enemies, who by the sword slew the conquered; and they consider that the hunters were those who were disposed to spare the life of the many, and to drive them into exile; but this appears too refined. Simple is the view which I have stated, that the Chaldeans were called fishers, because they would empty the whole land of its inhabitants, and that they were called hunters, because the Jews, having been scattered here and there, and become fugitives, would yet be found out in the recesses of hins and rocks.

The two similitudes are exceedingly suitable; for the Prophet shews that the Chaldeans would not have much trouble in taking the Jews, inasmuch as fishers only spread their nets; they do not arm themselves against fishes, nor is there any need; and then all the fish they take they easily take possession of them, for there is no resistance. Thus, then, he shews that the Chaldeans would gain an easy victory, for they would take the Jews as fishes which are drawn into nets. This is one thing. Then, in the second place, he says, that if they betook themselves into recesses of mountains, that if they hid themselves in caverns or holes, their enemies would be like hunters who follow the wild beasts in forests and in other unfrequented places; no brambles, nor thorns, nor any obstructions prevent them from advancing, being led on by a strong impulse; so in like manner no recesses of mountains would be concealed from the Chaldeans, no caverns where the Jews might hide themselves, for they would all be taken. We hence see that he confirms by two similitudes, what he had said in a preceding verse. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 16:17

17. For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes.

17. Quia oculi mei super omnes vias ipsorum; non absconditae sunt a facie mea, et non sunt occultae iniquitates e regione oculorum meorum, (coram oculis meis; ad verbum est, de coram oculis meis.)

The Prophet now shews that the grievous calamity of which he had spoken would be a just reward for the wickedness of the people; for we know that the prophets were endued with the Spirit of God not merely that they might foretell things to come --- for that would have been very jejune; but a doctrine was connected with their predictions. Hence the prophets not only foretold what God would do, but at the same time added the causes. There is then now added a doctrine as a seasoning to the prophecy; for the Prophet says that the destructiorl of the Jews was at hand, because they had long greatly provoked the wrath of God. As there is no end to the evasions of hypocrites, according to what we observed yesterday, God here reminds them of his judgment, as though he had said, ``This one thing is sufficient, he knows

their iniquities, and he is a fit judge; so they contend in vain, and try in vain, to excuse or to extenuate their fault.''

Hence he says that the eyes of God were on all their ways: and he mentions all their ways, because they had not offended only once, or in one way, but they had added sins to sins. Nor are they hid, he says: the Prophet presses the matter on their attention; for had he allowed their false pretences, they would have made no end of excuses. He therefore says that their ways were not hid, nor their iniquities concealed from the eyes of God. Now follows a confirmation ---

Jeremiah 16:18

18. And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcases of their detestable and abominable things.

18. Et rependam ab initio duplum iniquitatum eorum et scelerum eorum; quia polluerunt (super polluere ipsos) terram meam in cadaveribus abominationum suarum, et suis inquinamentis replerunt haereditatem meam.

Jeremiah introduces here nothing new, but proceeds with the subject we observed in the last verse, --- that God would not deal with so much severity with the Jews, because extreme rigor was pleasing to him, or because he had forgotten his own nature or the covenant which he had made with Abraham, but because the Jews had become extremely obstinate in their wickedness. As, then, he had said that the eyes of God were on all their ways, so now he adds that he would recompense them as they deserved.

But every word ought to be considered: He says {ראשונה} rashune, which I render ``From the beginning.'' Some render it more obscurely, ``at first,'' --- I will first recompense them. The word means formerly, and refers to time. The Prophet then, I have no doubt, means what I have already referred to, --- that God would punish the fathers and their children, and would thus gather into one mass their old iniquities. We have quoted from the law that God would recompense unto the bosom of children the sins of their fathers; and we have also quoted that declaration of Christ,

``Come upon you shall righteous blood from Abel to Zachariah, the son of Barachiah.'' (Matthew 23:35; Luke 11:51)

The Prophet now repeats the same thing, --- that God, in allotting to the Jews their reward, would collect together as it were all the iniquities which had been as it were long buried, so that he would include the fathers and their children in one bundle, and gather together all their sins, in order that he might consume them as it were in one heap. In this way I explain the term ``From the beginning.'' [423]

[423] The Septuagint omit this word, and give this rendering, “And I will recompense their twofold iniquities,” etc., so does the Vulgate, only it retains this word, and renders it “first.” But the Hebrew will not admit the connection of “two-fold” with “iniquities.” Venema gives the best exposition of this passage, from Jeremiah 16:14 to the end, he considers it a prophecy of the restoration of the people from Babylon. The “fishers” and “the hunters,” in Jeremiah 16:16, he regards as the indibviduals employed by God to gather them from the countries to which they had been dispersed, suych as Zerubbabel, Joshuah, Ezra, and Nehemiah. He connects this verse more especially with the latter part of Jeremiah 16:17. Having stated that their ways would not be hid from God in their dispersion, the Prophet refers to their previous iniquity as having not been hid from them, and then says in God’s name, “And I will first recompense doubly their iniquity,” etc., that is before I restore them. These two verses may be thus rendered, the first line being connected with the previous verse, — 17. For mine eyes shall be on all their

He then adds, The double of their iniquities and their sins The Prophet does not mean that there would be an excess of severity, as though God would not rightly consider what men deserved; but ``double'' signifies a just and complete measure, according to what is said in Isaiah 40:2,

``The Lord hath recompensed double for all her sins;''

that is, sufficiently and more, (satis superque) as the Latins say. There God assumes the character of a father, and, according to his great kindness, says that the Jews had been more than sufficiently punished. So also in this place, in speaking of punishment, he calls that double, not what would exceed the limits of justice, but because God would shew himself differently to them from what he had done before, when he patiently bore with them; as though he had said, ``I will to the utmost punish them; for there will be no remission, no lenity, no mercy.'' We hence see that what is here designed is only extreme rigor, which yet was just and right; for had God punished a hundred times more severely even those who seemed to have sinned lightly, his justice could not have been questioned as though he had acted cruelly. Since, the Jews, then, had in so many ways, and for so long a time, and so grievously sinned, God could not have been thought too severe, when he rendered to them their reward; and he calls it double because he omitted nothing in order to carry it to the utmost severity. Probably he alludes also to the enemies as being ministers of his vengeance, whose cruelty would be more atrocious than the Jews thought, who imagined some slight remedies for slight sins, as we say, Il n'y faudra plus retourner, or, tote outre.

He mentions sins and iniquities, for Jeremiah had introduced them before as speaking thus, ``What is our iniquity? and what is our sin?'' Though they could not wholly exculpate themselves, they yet continued to allege some pretences, that they might not appear to be altogether wicked. But here God declares that they were wholly wicked and ungodly; and he adds a confirmation, that they had polluted the land with the carcases of their abominations The Prophet mentions a particular thing, for had he spoken generally, the Jews would have raised a clamor and said, that they were not conscious of being so wicked. That he might then bring the matter home to them, he shews as it were by the finger that their sin was by no means excusable, for they had polluted the land of God with their superstitions; they have polluted, he says, my land He exaggerates their crime by saying, that they polluted the holy land. The earth indeed is God's and its fullness. (Psalm 24:1) Hence it might be said justly of the whole world, that the land of God is polluted when men act on it an ungodly part. But here God distinguishes Canaan from other countries, because it was dedicated as it were to his name. As God then had set apart that land for himself, that he might be there worshipped, he says, they have polluted my land

And he adds, With the carcases of their abominations It is probable that he calls

ways. Concealed have they not been from me, Nor hid has been their iniquity from my eyes; 18. And I will first doubly recompense Their iniquity and their sin, Because they have polluted my land With the vileness of their detestable things, And with their abominations have fined mine inheritance. As the previous verse is in the future tense, so the first line in Jeremiah 16:17. The "detestable things" were their idols. The version of the Septuagint is, "with the dead bodies ({θνησιμαίοις}) of their abominations;'' of the Vulgate, ``with the carrions (morticinis) of their idols;'' and of the Syriac, ``with the sacrifices of their idols.'' Blayney's rendering is, ``by the vileness of their odious practices.'' The word ``carcases'' is derived from the Targum. Idolatrous practices are evidently the things referred to. --- Ed

their sacrifices carcases. For though in appearance their superstitions bore a likeness to the true and lawful worship of God, yet we know that the sacrifices which God had commanded were seasoned by his word as with salt; they were therefore of good odor and fragrance before God. As to the sacrifices offered to idols, they were foetid carcases, they were mere rottenness, yet the ceremony was altogether alike. But God does not regard the external form, for obedience is better before him than all sacrifices. (1 Samuel 15:22) We hence see that there is to be understood a contrast between the carcases and the sweet odor which lawful sacrifices possessed. For as sacrifices, rightly offered according to the rule of the law, pleased God and were said to be of sweet savor so the victims superstitiously offered having no command of God in their favor, were called filthy carcases.

And he says further, With their defilements have they filled mine inheritance The land of Canaan is called the inheritance of God in the same sense in which the land is before called his land. But in this second clause something more is expressed, as it is the usual manner of Scripture to amplify. It was indeed a grievous thing that the land dedicated to God should be polluted; but when he says, This is mine inheritance, that is, the, land which I have chosen to dwell in with my people, that it might be to me as it were a kind of an earthly habitation, and that this land was fined with defilements, it was a thing altogether intolerable. We now then see that the Jews were so bridled and checked that they in vain attempted to escape, or thought to gain anything by evasions, for their impiety was intolerable and deserved to be most severely punished by God. I will not proceed further, for it is a new discourse.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast not given to thy servants a small corner only of the earth to dwell in, but hast designed to extend thy kingdom to the utmost borders of the earth, and to dwell with us, wherever we be, by thine only-begotten Son, --- O grant, that we may offer ourselves as sacrifices to thee, and labor also so to regulate our life according to thy word that thy name may be glorified in and by us, till we shall become at length partakers of that celestial and eternal glory, which has been provided for us by Christ our Lord --- Amen.

Lecture Sixty-Fifth

Jeremiah 16:19

19. O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.

19. Jehova, robur meum et munitio mea, et refugium in die angustiae, (vel, afflictionis) ad te Gentes venient e finibus terrae ac dicent, Certe mendacium possederunt patres nostri, vanitas (vanitatem) et nihil in ipsis utile.

What the Prophet has said hitherto might appear contrary to the promises of God, and wholly subversive of the covenant which he had made with Abraham. God had chosen to himself one people from the whole world, now when this people were trodden under foot what could the most perfect of the faithful suppose but that that covenant was rendered void, since God had resolved to destroy the Jews and to obliterate their name? This was then a most grievous trial, and sufficient, to shake

the strongest minds. The Prophet therefore now returns to the subject, and obviates this temptation; and seeing men in despair he turns to God, and speaks of the calling of the Gentiles, which was sufficient wholly to remove that stumbling --- block, which I have mentioned respecting the apostasy and ruin of the chosen people. We now perceive the Prophet's meaning.

When any one reads the whole chapter, he may think that Jeremiah abruptly turns to address God; but what I have stated ought to be borne in mind, for his purpose was to fortify himself and the faithful against the thought I have mentioned, which would have otherwise shaken the faith of them all. And he shews what is best to be done in a troubled and dark state of things, for Satan hunts for nothing more than to involve us in various and intricate disputes, and he is an acute disputant, yea, and a sophist; we are also very ready to receive what he may suggest, and thus it happens that the thoughts which we either attain ourselves or too readily receive when offered by the artifice of Satan, often overwhelm us. There is then no better remedy than to break off such disputes and to turn our eyes and all our thoughts to God. This the Prophet did when he said, O Jehovah, to thee shall the Gentiles come

We now see that Jeremiah sets the conversion of the Gentiles in opposition to the destruction which he had before denounced; for the truth of God and his mercy were so connected with the salvation of the chosen people, that their destruction seemed to obliterate them. Therefore the Prophet sets forth in opposition to this the conversion of the Gentiles, as though he had said, ``Though the race of Abraham perishes, yet God's covenant fails not, nor is there any diminution of his grace, for he will convert all the Gentiles to himself.'' If any one objects and says, that though the Gentiles be converted, yet the covenant of God could not have been valid and perpetual, except the posterity of Abraham were heirs of that grace which God had promised to him. To this there is a ready answer, for when God turned the Gentiles to himself he was mindful of his promise, so as to gather a Church to himself both from the Jews and the Gentiles, as we also know that Christ came to proclaim peace to those afar off and to them who were nigh, according to what Paul teaches. (Ephesians 2:17) Jeremiah then includes in the calling of the Gentiles what is said elsewhere,

``A remnant according to the election of grace.''
(Romans 9:5)

It is an argument from the greater to the less; ``God will not retain a few men only, but will gather to himself those who now seem dispersed through the whole world; much more then shall all those of the race of Abraham, who are chosen by God, be saved; and though the great body of the people perish, yet the Lord, who knows his own people, will not suffer them to perish even in the worst state of things.''

But as the struggle was difficult, he calls God his strength, and fortress, and refuge. He says {ומעזי} {עזי} ozi vemozi, ma force et forteresse, for the two words come from the same root, and we cannot in Latin thus fitly translate them. He then calls God his strength and his fortress, but both words are derived from a verb which means to be strong. He then adds, my refuge in the day of affliction We here see that God according to circumstances is adorned with names, such as are fit to give us confidence, and as it were to arm us for the purpose of sustaining all the assaults

of temptations, for there was not sufficient force and power in that plain declaration, ``O Jehovah, the Gentiles shall come to thee,'' but as the Prophet was reduced to the greatest straits, and, as I have said, his faith nmst have been greatly tried, he calls God his strength, his fortress, and his refuge in the day of affliction; as though he had said, ``Now is the time when I find how necessary is thy protection, thy strength, thy power; for though my present miseries, and the approaching ruin dishearten me, yet thou wilt be to me a refuge.''

But he says, that the Gentiles would come from the ends of the earth [424] A contrast is to be observed here also; for the Jews at first worshipped God, as it were in an obscure corner; but he says, ``When that land shall cast out its inhabitants, all nations shall come, not only from neighboring countries, but also from the extremities of the earth.'' He adds, that the Gentiles would say, surely falsehood leave our fathers possessed; it was vanity, there was nothing profitable in them To possess, here means the same as to inherit; for we know that one's own inheritance is valuable to him; and men are as it were fixed in their farms and fields. As then the Gentiles, before they were enlightened, thought their chief happiness to be in their superstitions, the Prophet says here, by way of concession, that they possessed falsehood, as though it was said, ``Our fathers thought themselves blessed and happy when they worshipped idols and their own inventions.'' It was therefore their heritage, that is, they thought nothing better or more to be desired than to embrace their idols and their errors; but it was falsehood, he says, that is, when they thought that they had a glorious inheritance it was only a foolish imagination; it was, in short, vanity, and there was nothing useful or profitable in them. This confession proves the conversion of the Gentiles by external evidences. When we offend God, not only secretly, but also by bad examples, repentance requires confession. Hence the Prophet shews a change in the Gentiles, for they would of themselves acknowledge that their fathers had been deceived by superstitions; for while they thought that they were acting rightly, they were only under the influence of inusions and fascinations.

But it is not to be doubted but that the Prophet here indirectly condemns the Jews, because they had not departed from the sins of their fathers, though they had been often admonished. The Gentiles then shall come, and the ignorance of their fathers shall not prevent them from confessing that they and their fathers were guilty before God. Since then the hinderance which from deliberate wickedness held fast

[424] Though the word rendered here "Gentiles" may be often so translated, yet it does not necessarily mean the heathens. It signifies a people associated together; and it may mean here the Jewish people in their dispersion, formed into companies or tribes, as Grotius thinks; and a due consideration of the context will lead us to this opinion. They are spoken of in Jeremiah 16:15 as "brought from all the lands" whither God had driven them; and as the idolatry of their fathers is continually mentioned in connection with their own, the confession in this verse seems appropriate to them; and the last verse, Jeremiah 16:21, clearly refers to the people of Israel. There is nothing in the whole passage (except it be this clause) that has any reference to the conversion of the heathens. I am aware that commentators take the same view of this clause with Calvin, yet I fully believe that the "nations" here were the Jews, scattered here and there, as distinct portions of the community, in various parts of the heathen world. The prophet, after having received an assurance of a restoration, makes a thankful acknowledgment to God, and tells us what would be the confession of the returned exiles, which includes the next verse. Then God assures him in the last verse, that such would be the effect of exile as to make them ever afterwards to acknowledge his power and his majesty, which has been remarkably fulfilled; for the Jews have never been guilty — of idolatry since their return from Babylon. — Ed.

the Jews, would not prevail with the Gentiles, it appeared evident how great was the contumacy of the people, who could not be persuaded to forsake the bad examples of their fathers. We now understand what the Prophet means, and for what purpose he introduced this prayer. It follows ---

Jeremiah 16:20

20. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?

20. An faciet sibi homo deos? et ipsi non sunt dii.

Some frigidly explain this verse, as though the Prophet said that men are doubly foolish, who form for themselves gods from wood, stone, gold, or silver, because they cannot change their nature; for whatever men may imagine, the stone remains a stone, the wood remains wood. The sense then they elicit from the Prophet's words is this --- that they are not gods who are devised by the foolish imaginations of men. But the Prophet reasons differently, --- ``Can he who is not God make a god?'' that is, ``can he who is created be the creator?'' No one can give, according to the common proverb, what he has not; and there is in man no divine power. We indeed see what our condition is; there is nothing more frail and perishable: as man then is all vanity, and has in him nothing solid, can he create a god for himself? This is the Prophet's argument: it is drawn from what is absurd, in order that men might at length acknowledge, not only their presumption, but their monstrous madness. For when any one is asked as to his condition, he must necessarily confess that he is a creature, and that he is also, as the ancients have said, all ephemeral animal, that his life is like a shadow. Since then men are constrained, by the real state of things, to make such a confession, how comes it that they dare to form gods for themselves? God does not create a god, he creates men; he has created angels, he has created the heavens and the earth, but yet he does not put forth his power to create a new god. Now man, what is he? nothing but vanity; and yet he will create a god though he is no God. [425]

There is no doubt but that the Prophet here, as with new rigor, boldly attacks the Jews. For it seems evident that, when this temptation assailed him --- ``What can this mean t what will at length happen when God rejects the race of Abraham whom he had chosen?'' he turned to God: but now, having recovered confidence, he inveighs against the ungodly, and says, can man create gods for himself while yet he is not a god? The change in the number ought not to be deemed strange; for when there is an indefinite declaration the nmnber is often changed, both in Greek and Latin. If some particular person was intended, the Prophet would not have said, And they themselves are not gods; but as he speaks of mankind generally and indefinitely, the

[425] Calvin in this instance follows the Syriac version, which is different from all the other ancient versions, and also the Targum. Blayney gives the same meaning with Calvin, which Horsley wholly disapproves, and which the Hebrew can hardly admit. The literal rendering is, — Shall man make for himself gods? But they are no gods. As the future may often be rendered potentially, the better version would be this, — Can man make for himself gods When they are no gods? That is, can he make gods of those who are not gods? This is, in my view, a continuation of the confession in the previous verse, which I render as follows, — “Truly, falsehood have our fathers inherited — vanity, And they had nothing that profited: Can man make for himself gods, When they are no gods?” “Falsehood” was false religion, the character of which was “vanity,” an empty and useless thing: and this is more fully asserted in the next line, which is literally, “And nothing in them,” or with them, i.e., the fathers, “that was profitable.” — Ed.

sentence reads better when he says, ``Shall man make a god? and they,'' that is men, ``are not gods.'' This remark I have added, because it is probable, that those who consider idols to be intended in the last clause have been led astray by the change that is made in the number. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 16:21

21. Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my nameis The LORD.

21. Propterea ecce ego cognoscere faciam ipsos hac vice, ostendam ipsis (cognoscere ipsos faciam) manum meam et potentiam meam; et cognoscent quod nomen meum Jehova.

The Prophet again threatens the Jews, because their impiety was inexcusable, especially when attended with so great an obstinacy, he therefore says that God was already present as a judge: Behold I, he says --- the demonstrative particle shews the near approach of vengeance --- I will shew at this time: the words are emphatical, for God indirectly intimates that the Babylonian exile would be an extraordinary event, far exceeding every other which had preceded it. At this time, he says --- that is, if ye have hitherto been tardy and insensible, or, if the punishments I have already inflicted have not been sufficiently severe --- I will at this time shew to them my hand and my power; and they shall know that my name is Jehovah [426]

This way of speaking often occurs in Scripture; but God here, no doubt, reproves the false sentiments with which the Jews were imbued, and by which they were led astray from true religion --- for they had devised for themselves many gods; hence he says, They shall know that my name is Jehovah, that is, that my name is sacred, and ought not to be given to others. But at the same time he intimates that he would shew to them his power by destroying them, which they had refused to acknowledge in the preservation promised to them. They would indeed have ever found the God of Abraham to be the same, had they not deprived themselves of his favor. As then they had wandered after their own delusions and inventions, God says now, I will shew to them my hand, that is, for their ruin; and they shall now know for their own misery what they had refused to acknowledge for their own safety --- that I am the only true God.

[426] As the captivity and the restoration of the people are expressly referred to in the previous verses, it seems necessary to connect here the display of God's power with both these events. The restoration was as remarkable an instance of divine interposition as the captivity, if not more so. And the future effect on the people's mind, their preservation from idolatry, is to be ascribed to the power manifested in their restoration as well as in their captivity. "Therefore," at the beginning of the verse, seems to be an inference from what has been said of the captivity and the restoration; and this accounts for the repetition of making known to them his power: God first made known his power in driving them to captivity, and, secondly, in restoring them, — Therefore, behold I make known to them, at this time, And I will make known to them My hand and my power; And they shall know that my name is Jehovah. The Septuagint is as follows, — Therefore, behold I will manifest to them at this time my hand, And I will make known to them my power; And they shall know that my name is the Lord. To remove the word "hand" to the first line has no MS. in its favor; but it shews that they thought that the two verbs had a similar objective case, and the conjunction "and" is supplied before the second verb, as it is also in the Syriac and Arabic. It is probable that by the "hand" is meant the infliction of punishment, and is rendered "vengeance" in the Targum; and that by "power" or strength is intended what God manifested in the restoration of the people. The combined influence of both was to make them to know that God was really Jehovah, the only supreme, ever the same, true and faithful, without any change. How remarkably has this prophecy been accomplished! The Jews have ever since acknowledged Jehovah as the only true God. — Ed.

Here let us first learn that it was wholly a diabolical madness, when men dared to devise for themselves a god; for had they regarded their own beginning and their own end, doubtless they could not have betrayed so much presumption and audacity as to invent a god for themselves. If this only came to the mind of an idolater, ``What art thou? whence is thine origin? where goest thou, and what end awaits thee?'' all his false imaginations would have instantly fallen to the ground; he would no longer think of forming a god for himself, nor of worshipping anything he might invent. How then does it happen that men proceed to such a madness as to devise gods for themselves, according to their own fancies, except that they know not themselves? It is then no wonder that men are blind in seeking God, when they do not consider nor examine themselves. It hence follows that God cannot be rightly worshipped except men are made humble. And humility is the best preparation for faith, that there may be a submission to the word of God. Idolaters do indeed pretend some kind of humility, but they afterwards involve themselves in such stupidity, that they are unwining to make any enquiry, so as to make any difference between light and darkness. But true humility leads us to seek God in his word.

But when the Prophet asks this question, ``Shall man make a god for himself?'' he does not mean, that either the Egyptians or the Assyrians were so ignorant as to think that they could give divinity to wood or stone; but that whatever men dared to invent for themselves as to divine worship, was nothing else but the creation of a god. As soon then as we allow ourselves the liberty to worship God in this or in that way, or to imagine God to be such and such a being, we create gods for ourselves. And as to that point where he says, They shall know that my name is Jehovah, we must observe, that what is his own is taken away from God, except we acquiesce in him alone, so as to allow no other divinities to creep in and to be received; for God does not retain his own right or his own glory, except he be regarded as the only true God. Now follows ---

Chapter 17

CHAPTER 17

Jeremiah 17:1

1. The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars.

1. Peccatum (vel scelus) Jehudah scripture est in stylo ferri (ferreo) et in ungue adamantino, exaratum super tabulam cordis eorum et ad cornua altarium vestrorum.

The Prophet teaches us here in other words what we have often already seen, --- that the Jews in vain sought refuges, for their sin had so much accumulated that it was very apparent. It indeed often happens, that men fall; but God, who is ever inclined to mercy, forgives them; and they are also often led astray through levity, and thus their sins are not engraven on their hearts. But Jeremiah says, that nothing remained for that nation but to be entirely swept away, because their iniquity was past recovery. Had they been lightly besprinkled with vices, there might have been still a remedy for them; but when their iniquities were engraven on their hearts, on their marrow and bones, what more remained for them? He had said before,

``Can the Ethiop change his skin?'' (Jeremiah 13:23)

though the Ethiop may change his skin, and also the panther, yet thou art still like thyself. They had so completely imbibed a contempt for God, and also perverseness, that they could not by any means be restored to a right mind. We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet in this passage.

He says that the sin of Judah was written with an iron pen, with the point of adamant; as though he had said, ``They are not only slightly imbued with iniquity, for then there might be some healing; but iniquity is engraven on their inmost feelings, as though one had graven it with adamant or with an iron pen.'' It hence appears, that they were wholly unworthy of pardon, as they were in no way capable of receiving mercy, how much soever God might have been inclined to receive them into favor; for their obstinacy had closed the way of salvation; nor could they apply to

themselves the promises, for they require repentance in sinners.

He then adds, It is graven on the table of their heart; as though he had said, that they were so addicted to iniquity, that all their inward parts bore the impressions of it. It hence follows that the Jews were so proved to be guilty, that they in vain contrived evasions, for their own conscience condemned them. At the same time, I consider the Prophet as speaking not only of guilt, but also of sin itself, and of their propensity to evil. He means then that the Jews had not only sinned and transgressed God's law in a way not common, but that they were also so given up to wickedness as to delight in the iniquity that was graven on their hearts. He calls by a metaphor the affections or feelings the tables of the heart: For he compares the heart to tables; as writing appears when cut in stone or brass, so when a sinful impression is made on the hearts of men, iniquity itself may be said to be graven on the tables of the heart.

He afterwards adds, And on the horns of your altars. He had spoken of the heart, he now proceeds farther, --- that there appeared openly an evidence of hidden iniquity. Had he spoken only of their hearts, the Jews might have objected and said, ``How canst thou penetrate into our hearts? Art thou God, to examine and try our inward emotions?'' But the Prophet adds, that their iniquity was sufficiently known by their altars. He at the same time intimates, that they in vain alleged the name of religion; for under that pretense they especially sinned against God; for they had vitiated his pure worship. And to confirm this very thing he adds ---

Jeremiah 17:2

2. Whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills.

2. Secundum recordari filios ipsorum (hoc est, cum memores erunt filii ipsorum) altarium ipsorum et lucorum ipsorum super arborem frondosam, super colles excelsos.

Interpreters seem not to me to have perceived the design of the Prophet here, at least they have not clearly explained the subject. He proceeds, as I think, with what he said at the end of the last verse, --- that the iniquity of Judah was graven on the altars, or on the horns of the altars: how was this? even because they transmitted to posterity whatever they devised as to their ungodly forms of worship. How then was iniquity graven on the horns of the altars? even because it was not a temporary wickedness only, when the Jews cast aside the Law and followed their corrupt superstitions; but, on the contrary, their iniquity flowed down, as it were, by a hereditary right, to their posterity. Justly then does Jeremiah accuse them, that they were not only led away into evil through the whole course of their own lives, but that they also corrupted their children, for they left to them memorials of their own superstitions.

Some give this explanation, ``As they remember their children, so also their altars;'' as though the Prophet had said, that idolaters burnt with such ardor, that they held the altars dedicated to their idols as dear to them as their own children. But this view seems too forced. I then have no doubt but that the Prophet here amplifies their wickedness, when he says, that it was graven on the horns of the altars; for their posterity remembered the superstitions, which they had received from their

fathers. He mentions also their groves; [427] for on or near every shady tree they built altars; and also on all high hills. It follows ---

Jeremiah 17:3

3. O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance and all thy treasures to the spoil, and thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders.

3. Montane, in agro substantiam tuam (opes tuas,) omnes thesauros tuos in praedam dabo propter excelsa tua, propter peccatum tuum in omnibus finibus tuis.

The Prophet again repeats, that punishment was nigh the Jews, and that it availed them nothing to seek for themselves recesses and lurking-places, for God would draw them forth from the mountains and expose them as a prey to their enemies.

Some render {הררי}, erri, ``O my mountain,'' etc.; and at the first view this meaning seems appropriate; but as the context requires this to be understood of the Israelites and the Jews, who always resorted to their recesses, when any fear of enemies assailed them, I prefer another rendering. Since then at times of distress they betook themselves to their hiding-places, the Prophet says, that they would in vain attempt to escape, for the mountains would be like the fields: I will expose, he says, as in the field, or the plain, your riches and treasures, that they may become a prey to your enemies. The meaning is, that the Prophet denounces vengeance on the Jews, and at the same time shakes off their foolish confidence, which rendered them secure, so as to despise all the threatenings of God: ``Ye think,'' he says, ``that there will be a safe refuge for you on the mountains; but God will draw forth from thence all your possessions, and expose them on the open field, so that they may become an easy prey.''

He again repeats what he had said, that God would inflict a just punishment on the Jews, because they had sinned very greatly on their high places. By high places he doubtless means all their ungodly and corrupt modes of worship. For God had chosen for himself a Temple on Mount Sion; he designed sacrifices to be offered there: but they, carried away by a foolish zeal, had built for thenlselves many altars, so that there was no hill where they had not set up some altar or another. By stating then a part for the whole, the Prophet here refers to every thing that was inconsistent with the law of God: and in order to amplify their sin, he says, In all thy borders; that is, their impiety was widely and extensively diffused, so that no part of the land was free from their corrupt superstition. Since then the land was throughout contaminated, justly does the Prophet say, ``In all thy borders;'' he declares that there would be no refuge for them, to preserve them and their treasures from becoming a prey to their enemies. It follows ---

Jeremiah 17:4

4. And thou, even thyself, shalt discontinue from thine heritage that I gave thee; and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not: for ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, which shall burn for ever.

4. Et derelinqueris et in te ab haereditate tua, quam dedi tibi, et servire to faciam inimicis tuis in terra quam non cognoscis: quia ignem succendistis in excandescentia

[427] The word rendered “groves,” means also idols. See 2 Kings 23:6, where “grove” in our version must mean an idol. What follows here, “near the green tree,” shews clearly that “idols,” or images, are the things meant; and such is the version given by Venema and Horsley. — Ed.

mea (vel, in nare mea, vultu meo) in saeculum usque (id est, in perpetuum) ardebit.

Here, as it is a concise mode of speaking, there seems to be some obscurity; but as to the subject handled, the meaning of the Prophet is evident, that they would be dismissed from their inheritance, and as it were from their own bowels. Hence he says, You shall be dismissed from your inheritance; that is, though ye think yourselves to be beyond the reach of danger, because as yet the city remains safe, and ye continue in it; yet ye shall perish, as they say, living and seeing. There shall then be a dismissal from the inheritance even as to thee; that is, ``Though the Lord should delay the time and suffer you to remain, yet ye shall be like the dead, for God will destroy you, though he may leave you a pining life.'' It seems an emphatical expression when the Prophet says that there would be at length a dismissal even as to herself: he intimates, that though some of the people would remain alive, they would yet be given up to exile and dispersion. And it was a condition worse than death for the Jews to have their lives continued and to be scattered among their enemies.

And he says, From the inheritance which I gave to thee; and he says this that they might not expostulate with him, that their own was taken away from them. ``How has the land,'' he says, ``become your inheritance? even because ye have obtained it through my bounty. And now, since ye are so ungrateful, why should I be blamed for taking away what I had given you? or what wrong is done to you? and what can ye object to me? for it has always been my heritage, though for a time I granted it to you. Had ye been thankful to me it would have been yours perpetually; but now when I deprive you of it, this you must ascribe to your own fault.''

For the same purpose he adds, I will make thee to serve thine enemies: and this was much more grievous than to serve their neighbors by whom they were not hated. But he shews here how dreadful would be their calamity, they being constrained to serve their enemies. He adds, In a land which thou knowest not. This is a repetition of what has been said before, and it requires no remark. He in the last place confirms what he had said of their wickedness; Burn, he says, shall fire in my nostril: but {אף}, aph, may be taken for God's countenance, though it often means anger. As however he says, ``Ye have kindled a fire,'' it seems better to render it here, In my face. Further, by the word I never, he intimates that God would be implacable to the Jews, for they had so deserved. [428]

[428] The whole of this passage, from the first to the end of the fourth verse, is wanting in the Septuagint and Arabic, but is found in the other versions and the Targum. The many emendations of Houbigant and Horsley are quite unwarrantable; the first makes his mostly from the Syriac; and the second from various readings, and those of no value, except in one or two instances, as "their" instead of "your altars" in the first verse, countenanced by very many MSS.; the other nine emendations have, for the most part, nothing of any weight in their favor. The transpositions of Houbigant are quite irreconcilable with any thing like errors incidentally committed by scribes. The same objection does not lie against the emendations of Horsley; but that ten mistakes should occur in the space of four verses is not credible; nor are most of the emendations at all necessary. The received text is no doubt materially correct, there being no different readings of any weight or suitable, except the one noticed above. The Vulgate, the Syriac, and Targum, differ from one another as much as they do from the Hebrew. They indeed all agree materially as to the beginning of the third verse, in regarding "the mountain" and "the field" as places where the people worshipped idols; and the Vulgate and the Syriac connect the words with the former verse; and this, I believe, is what ought to be done. Then the passage will read as follows: — 1. The sin of Judah is written by a pen of iron, By the point of adamant it is graven, On the tablet of their heart, And on the horns of their altars: 2. As

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou kindly invitest us every day to repentance, and shewest thyself ready to be reconciled, --- O grant that we may not through our perverseness reject so inestimable a favor, but submit ourselves to thee, and become so displeased with our vices as to be touched with a true and sincere concern for religion, and to labor through the whole course of our life for nothing else but to render ourselves and our duties approved by thee, and thus to glorify thy name, so that we may become at last partakers of that celestial and eternal glory which thine only-begotten Son has attained for us. --- Amen.

Lecture Sixty-Sixth

Jeremiah 17:5-6

5. Thus saith the LORD, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.

5. Sic dicit Jehova, Maledictus vir qui confidit in homine, et ponit carnem brachium suum, et a Jehova aversum est cor ejus:

6. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

6. Et erit quasi myrica (sic vertunt communiter) in deserto, et non videbit cum veniet bonum (id est, in foecunditas,) et habitabit in siccitatibus in deserto, in terra salsuginis, et quae non habitatur.

The Prophet, I doubt not, prefixed this sentence to many of his discourses, for it was neccssary often to repeat it, as the Jews were so refractory in their minds. We have already seen how sharply he inveighed against their false confidence: but it was necessary to lay down this truth. He then wrote once for all what he had often said. And this deserves to be especially observed, for we shall not sufficiently understand how needful this truth was, unless we consider the circumstances: the Prophet had often found that the promises as well as the threatenings of God were disregarded, that his doctrine was despised, and that he had to do with a proud people, who, relying on their own defences, not only esteemed as nothing what was brought before them under the authority of God, but also, as it were, avowedly rejected it. This then was the reason why the Prophet not only once, but often exhorted the people to repent, by setting before them this truth, that accursed are they who trust in men.

Flesh here is to be taken for man, as we may easily gather from the context. It was a common thing with the Hebrews to state the same thing twice: In the first

a memorial to their children Are their altars and their idols, Near the green tree, on the high hills, On the mountains, in the field. — 3. Thy substance, all thy treasures For a plunder will I give, Thy high places also for sin in all thy borders; 4. And thou shalt be removed, even for thyself, From thine inheritance which I gave thee; And I will make thee to serve thine enemies In a land which thou knowest not; For a fire have ye kindled in mine anger, Perpetually shall it burn. According to the frequent manner of the prophets, the last line in the first verse is connected with the first line, and the third with the second. The sin of Judah was "written" on "the horns of the altars;" it was "graven" on "the tablet of their heart." The services at the altars were visible; the impressions within were seen only by God. They left their altars and their idols to their children. The genitive case in Hebrew may often be rendered by a dative, as here, "A memorial to their children." All emendations as to the beginning of the third verse are unsatisfactory: it will bear the rendering above; "for thyself," that is, for thine own fault. — Ed.

clause man is mentioned, and in the second flesh: and arm means power or help. The meaning is, that all are accursed who trust in man. But the word flesh is no doubt added in the second line by way of contempt, according to what is done in Isaiah 31:3, where the Prophet says,

``The Egyptian is man and not God, flesh and not spirit.''

He calls the Egyptians flesh by way of contempt, as though he had said that there was nothing strong or firm in them, and that the aid which the Jews expected from them would be evanescent. So it is in this place, though the Prophet, according to the common usage, repeats in the second clause what he had said in the first, he yet expresses something more, that men are extremely sottish when they place their salvation in a thing of nought; for, as we have said, there is nothing solid or enduring in flesh. As men therefore quickly vanish away, what can be more foolish than to seek safety from them?

But it must be observed that the Prophet had spoken thus, because the Jews, in looking now to the Assyrians and then to the Egyptians, thought to gain sufficient defense against God himself, though they might not have expressly or avowedly despised God: but we shall hereafter see that God cannot be otherwise deemed than of no account, when safety is sought from mortal man. As then this false confidence was an hinderance to the Jews to rely on the favor of God, and to lead them to repentance, the Prophet said Accursed is the man who trusts in man

It seems to be a sentence abruptly introduced; but as we have observed, the doctrine of the Prophet could not have been confirmed, had he not shaken off from his people the presumption through which they were blinded, for they thought the Egyptians would be to them like a thousand gods. We shall thus understand the design of the Prophet, if we bear in mind what was the condition of the Jews, and what were the difficulties the Prophet had to contend with, while he was daily threatening them and labouting to restore them to God. But no progress was made, and why? because all God's promises were coldly received, for they thought themselves ever safe and secure, while the Egyptians were kind to them and promised them help: his threatenings also were coldly received, because they hesitated not to set up as their shield, and as the strongest fortress, the aid which they expected from the Egyptians. Hence the Prophet was constrained to cry out, not only once, or ten times, but a hundred times, accursed is he who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm [429]

This is however a general truth. We also, at this day, advance general truths, which we apply to individual cases. The spirit then declares here generally, that all are accursed who trust in men. We indeed know that men are in various ways deceived while they trust in men: they begin with themselves, and seek in this and in that thing a ground of security; for every one is inflated with vain and false confidence, either in his own prudence or dexterity or power. There is then no one who does not trust in himself before he trusts in others: I speak even of the most

[429] Like the Hebrew, there is no need of the verb is, or be, after "cursed," inWelsh: the sentence is more emphatieal without it. In that language, too, the future tense of "trust" is understood as the present, — Melldigedig y gwr yr hwn a hydero mewn dyn. It is a denunciation, not an imprecation; therefore "be," introduced into the English version, is not proper. — Ed.

wretched. It is indeed what men ought to be ashamed of; but there is no one so contemptible but that he swells with some secret pride, so that he esteems something in himself, and even ascribes to himself some high dignity. Then they who seem prudent in their own eyes take aids to themselves from every quarter, and in these they acquiesce. But when men look behind and before, they gather help to themselves from all parts of the world: however their goings around are useless, and not only so, but they turn out to their own destruction, for God not only derides in this place the folly of them who trust in flesh, but declares that they are accursed This curse of God ought to strike us with terror; for we hence learn that God is highly displeased with all those who seek their own salvation in the world and in creatures.

It is added, And from Jehovah turned away is his heart. Hypocrites draw this to their own advantage; for there is no one who will not object and say, that he does not so trust in man as to take away or diminish anything from the glory of God. Were all asked, from the least to the greatest, every one would boldly say that he leaves God's honor entire, and never wishes to take anything from it: this would be the common saying. But yet, when confidence is reposed in the flesh, God is deprived of his own honor. These two things are no less contrary, the one to the other, than light is to darkness. Hence the Prophet intended here to shew that these two things cannot be connected together --- to put confidence in the flesh and in God at the same time. When water is blended with fire, both perish; so, when one seeks in part to trust in God and in part to trust in men, it is the same as though he wished to mix heaven and earth together, and to throw all things into confusion. It is, then, to confound the order of nature, when men imagine that they have two objects of trust, and ascribe half of their salvation to God, and the other half to themselves or to other men. This is the meaning of the Prophet.

Let us then know that all those who place the least portion of their hope in men do in part depart from God, and therefore turn aside from him. In short, the Holy Spirit declares, briefly indeed, but very solemnly, that all are apostates and deserters from God who turn to men and fix their hope in them. But if this declaration be true as to the present life, when we treat of eternal life, it is doubtless a twofold madness if we ascribe it, even in the smallest degree, either to our own righteousness or to any other virtues. He who looks for aid from men is pronounced accursed by God, even when he expects from them what belongs to this frail life, which soon vanishes; but when we hope for eternal life and the inheritance of heaven from ourselves or from other creatures, how much more detestable it is? Let us then observe this inference, so that the truth taught here by the Prophet may keep us dependent on God only.

But here a question may be raised, --- Are we not to hope for help from those men whom God may employ to assist us, and who are not only the instruments of his favor and aid, but who are also as it were his hands? for whenever men assist us, it is the same as though God stretched forth his hands from heaven. Why, them, should we not look for aid from men whom God has appointed as ministers of his favor to us? But there is great emlphasis in the word trust; for it is indeed lawful to look to men for what is given to them; but we ought to trust in God alone, and to hope for all things from him, as well as to pray for them: and this will hereafter

appear more clearly. But we must now only briefly observe, that when we seek from men what is given them by God, we detract nothing from his power, who chooses his ministers as he pleases. But this is a rare thing; for when anything is done to us by men, we forget God, and our thoughts are drawn downwards to men, so that God loses a part of his honor; and when anything, even the least, is taken away from him, he condemns us, as we deserve. We ought especially to observe what he declares here, that turned away from him is the heart of man whenever he places his hope in the flesh.

He adds a similitude for the purpose of confirming his doctrine, He shall be like a tamarisk, or a juniper, as some render it. The word {ערער}, oror, means a copse. But the Jews themselves are not agreed; some think it to be the juniper, and others the tamarisk; but we may hold it as certain that it was a useless shrub, not fruit-bearing for those Jews are mistaken, in my judgment, who consider it to be the juniper, for some fruit grows on branches of that. It was a shrub or a tree, as I think, unknown to us now. [430]

Then he says that they were like shrubs which grow in the desert, which see not fruitfulness, but dwell in droughts, in a land of brine. The Hebrews call barren land the land of brine or of salt: and he enlarges on the subject by saying, Which is not inhabited: for where nothing grows there are no inhabitants. The object of the Prophet, then, was merely to shew, that their hopes who look to men would be vain; for God would frustrate thenl, so that they could never succeed.

But we must notice also the other part of the simile; for the Prophet does not compare the unbelieving to dry branches, but to shrubs, which have roots, and bear the appearance of having some life. Such are the unbelieving, while success, as they say, smiles on them; they think themselves happy, and so they become hardened in their own false counsels, and reject every instruction, and, as though they were freed from the authority of God, they rejected all his prophets. Hence the Prophet, conceding something to them, says, that they were like shrubs, which indeed have roots and leaves, but no fruit, and which also dry up when heat comes. As then the heal; of the sun consumes whatever moisture, beauty, and life, may appear in shrubs, so also God would scorch and dry up the hopes of the unbelieving, though they may think that they have roots to preserve them and their life. A similar declaration is found in Psalm 129:6, where it is said that the unbelieving are like the grass which grows on the housetops; for such grass appears conspicuous in a high place, while the wheat grows in the low fields, and is even trodden under foot; but that grass, the

[430] It is rendered "a wild tamarisk — {ἁγριομυρίκη}," by the Septuagint; ``a tamarisk,'' by the Vulgate and the Targum; and ``a log,'' or ``a trunk,'' by the Syriac. Gataker considers that no particular tree is meant, but that it means a ``solitary'' or a ``barren'' tree, agreeably, in his view, with what is contrasted with it in the 8th verse. Blayney renders it, ``a blasted tree.'' of which Horsley approves. The word is a reduplicate of a verb, which means to be bare; and the wild tamarisk may suitably be thus designated, as it bears a very few leaves. The idea of being ``blasted'' is foreign to the word. But Venema contends that the reference is not to any tree, but to a person dwelling in solitude; and he renders the passage thus, --- And he shall be like the naked in solitude, Nor shall he see when good cometh; And is like him who inhabits parched spots in the desert, A land of salt and not inhabited. The words ``see'' and ``inhabit,'' appear doubtless more suitable when the passage is thus rendered; yet what is said of the ``tree'' in verse 8 is equally metaphorical. What seems most agreeable to the whole context is such a rendering as follows: --- And he shall be like a bare tree in the desert, Which perceives not when good cometh; For it inhabits parched spots in the wilderness, The land of salt and not inhabited. It is sometimes the case that it is proper in our language to render the copulative {ו} by ``which;'' not that it properly means that, but the meaning cannot be otherwise seen. The connection here is with the ``bare'' tree; it is bare, and perceives or knows not widen good comes, for it inhabits parched places. This seems to be the meaning. --- Ed.

more elevated it is, the sooner it dries up and perishes without bringing forth any fruit; so also are the unbelieving, who for a time glory and exult over God's children, and look down on then from their high place, because they are simple and lowly; but as from the corn comes food to us, and that very corn is blessed, so also the elect bring forth fruit in their low and despised condition, while the unfaithful, who occupy elevated stations, vanish away without producing any fruit. It is the same thing that the Prophet means here. These two parts of the comparison ought therefore to be particularly noticed. It follows ---

Jeremiah 17:7-8

7. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

7. Benedictus vir qui confidit in Jehova, et cujus est Jehova fiducia (ad verbum, et erit Jehova fiducia ejus:)

8. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

8. Et erit tanquam arbor plantata prope aquas, et prope rivum emittet (hoc est, quae emittit) radices suas, et non videbit cum veniet aestus, et erit folium ejus viride, et anno prohibitionis non timebit, et non desinet a faciendo fructu (hoc est, a proferendo fructu.)

Observed ought to be the order which the Prophet keeps; for he could not have profitably spoken of this second part had he not first taken away that false confidence to which the Jews had long cleaved; for when any one casts seed on an uncultivated soil, what fruit can there be to his labor? As then it is necessary to make use of the plough before the seed is sown, so also, when we seek to teach profitably, it is necessary to pull up the vices which have their roots in the hearts of men; and this especially must be the case when we treat of faith in God alone, and of sincere calling on his name. And the Prophet had a particular reason for what he did, because the Jews had long hardened themselves in false confidences, so that they disregarded God in two respects, --- they despised his threatenings, and also made no account of his gracious promises. The Prophet then couht have effected nothing had he not pursued this method, --- that is, to correct the evil by which they had been long tainted; for noxious weeds must be first taken away before there can be any room for the corn to grow.

But had he spoken only negatively, that is, had he only condemned their false confidence, it would not have been sufficient. The Jews indeed might have said, that they had been deceived in placing their hopes in the Egyptians; but this might have happened through some bad men: and by looking for aid elsewhere, when disappointed, they would indeed have condemned their own counsels, but would yet have remained in suspense and anxious, without seeking God. Hence we see how suitably the Prophet began by condemning the Jews for placing confidence in men, and then how wisely he added this second part; for, as I have said, it was not enough to speak as it were negatively, without inviting them to return to God. But this is often the case in the present day; for we see that many laugh at those superstitions which have hitherto prevailed under the Papacy; but yet no religion appears in them.

It is enough for them to ridicule these mummeries; but it would have been better for them to be retained in the fear of God, even by some superstition, than thus to expose evil, and yet to have no reverence for God. It is the same absurdity as to pull down a bad house and to leave man under the open air; for what end can such a thing be done? for he who is compelled to leave his house had something to cover him for a time. Hence it is not sufficient to destroy what is bad, except a good building succeeds.

This is the method and order which the Prophet observed: After having said, that all they are accursed who confide in men, he now adds, Blessed is the man who trusts in Jehovah; as though he had said, that men are wholly inexcusable in relying on themselves or on others, when God willingly offers himself to them. What then in it that prevents men from having their safety secured? Their own sin in rejecting the grace of God, which is freely offered to them; but they prefer to deceive themselves, and to ascribe to themselves and to others what justly belongs to God alone.

We see then that the ingratitude of the whole world is here condemned by the Prophet when he says, that all who trust in Jehovah are blessed: for had God concealed himself there would have been some covering for ignorance; and also a defense of this kind might have been made, --- ``What else could we do? We sought the aid which was within our reach: had God called us to himself or allowed us to come to him, we would have been very willing; but as he has forsaken us, it was indeed the last refuge of despair to consider what was to be done, and to seek from every quarter aids for ourselves.'' Hence the Prophet here shews that all such defences were frivolous, for God had freely invited them to himself; for to no purpose would he have said, that they are blessed who trust in Jehovah, had not God set himself forth as their confidence.

But we must notice what farther confirms this sentence, which is in itself very clear, And whose confidence Jehovah is. No additional light seems to be given to the preceding truth; and then what ambiguity does it contain which requires an explanation? Blessed is the man who trusts in Jehovah; even children can understand this: the words, then, of the Prophet are either superfluous, or there is some reason why he repeats what is so clear. Doubtless the unbelief, which every one of us finds in himself, is the best teacher; for even they who seem to have real confidence in God, yet falter when some trial assails them. Since then it is a common thing with us to look around to various quarters when any danger is near, we may hence, easily know that we do not hope in God. What then seems to us so easy, we find in reality to be very difficult: and hence the Prophet, after having said, that they are blessed who trust in God, has mentioned this in the second place, And whose hope is God; as though he had said, ``The world knows not what it is to trust in God: though every one boldly testifies this, and even boastingly declares that he trusts in God, yet not one in a thousand finds that he understands this, or has ever known what it is from the heart to hope in God.'' We now see that this repetition is not superfluous or unmeaning.

He then adds a comparison, answerable to that in the former clause, He shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which sends its roots upon, or nigh the river,

which shall not see when heat comes. Here the Prophet points out the difference between the true servants of God, who trust in him, and those who are inflated with their own false imaginations, so that they seek safety either from themselves or from others: he had said of the unbelieving, that they are like tamarisks, which flourish for a time, but never bring forth any fruit, and are also soon dried up by the heat; but he says now as to the faithful, that they are like trees planted by the waters, and send their roots to the river. The tamarisks have the appearance of life, but there is no moisture in a dry soil; so their roots quickly dry up; but the servants of God, they are planted, as it were, in a moist soil, irrigated continually by streams of water. Hence the Prophet adds, that this tree shall not see the heat when it comes

He indirectly intimates that God's children are not exempt from adversities; for they feel the heat of the sun, like trees, who are exposed to it; but moisture is supplied, and the juice diffuses itself through all the branches: hence the Prophet says, that the leaf was green, even by means of the moisture which the earth supplied, being itself watered. The Prophet then intimates, that though God's children feel great heats, as well as the unbelieving; for this is common to both, they shall yet be kept safe; for though the sun dries up by its great heat, there is yet a remedy; for the root has moisture, derived from the irrigation of water.

We now then see how suitable is every part of the comparison. He says farther, that it shall not be careful. The verb {דאג}, dag, means to fear and to be careful; it means also sometimes to grieve, and so some render it here, ``It will not grieve'' but the other meaning seems better to me, --- that the tree planted nigh streams of waters is not afraid of heat; and then he adds, nor shall it cease from producing fruit [431]

Nearly the same similitude is found in Psalm 1:3, only that the fear of God and meditation on his law are mentioned, and not hope:

``Blessed is the man, etc., who meditates on the law of God;''

but Jeremiah speaks here expressly of the hope which ought to be put in God alone. Yet the two Prophets well agree together as to this truth, --- that all their hopes are accursed, by which men inebriate themselves, while they seek salvation in themselves or in the world, and make more account of their own counsels, virtues, power, or the aids they expect from others, than of God himself and of his promises: for he who really meditates on the law of God day and night, well knows thereby, where to put his trust for salvation, both temporal and eternal. It follows ---

Jeremiah 17:9-10

9. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

9. Insidiosum cor prae omnibus (super omnia) et perversum (vertunt quidam; alii,

[431] The verbs here are all futures, but ought to be rendered in our language, as they are in Syriac, in the present tense, — And he shall be like a tree which is planted by waters, And nigh the stream sends forth its roots, Which perceives not when heat comes; And its leaf is flourishing, And in the year of drought it suffers not, And never ceases from bringing forth fruit. The verb {,{דאג when applied to the mind, means agitation, commotion, trouble, disturbance: but here, as applied to a tree, it must mean a withering effect, a disturbance as to the process of growing. Joined with a negative, it may therefore be rendered, ``it suffers not,'' or, it withers not, according to the Targum, which applies it to the leaf, but not correctly. ``It will not fear'' is the rendering of the Septuagint; of the Vulgate, ``it will not be careful,'' as in our version; and of Blayney, ``it is without concern.'' None of these give the secondary meaning of the verb, which it evidently has here. --- Ed

durum; alii, eagrotum; possumus vertere, vitiosum, vel, morbidum;) quis cognoscet illud?

10. I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

10. Ego Jehova exquirens (vel, explorans) cor, examinans renes, ad dandum (id est, ut dem, ut reddam) cuique secundum vias ejus, secundum fructum operum ejus.

What is taught here depends on what is gone before; and therefore they ought to be read together. Many lay hold on these words and mutilate them without understanding the design of the Prophet. This is very absurd: for we ought first to see what the prophets had in view, and by what necessity or cause they were led to speak, what was their condition, and then the general doctrine that may be gafilered from their words. If we wist to read the prophets with benefit, we must first consider the reason why a thing is spoken, and then elicit a general doctrine. Thus we shall be able rightly to apply this passage to a common use, if we first understand why the Prophet said, that the heart of man was insidious. He wished, no doubt, to be more earnest with the Jews; for he saw that they had so much wantonness and obstinacy, that a simple and plain doctrine would not have penetrated into their hearts. The declaration, that they are accursed who trust in men, and that no blessedness can be expected except we rely on God, ought to have been sufficient to move them; but when he saw that there was no sufficient power in such a declaration, he added, ``I see how it is, the heart is wicked and vicious; so ye think that you have so much craftiness, that ye can with impunity deride God and his ministers: I, says Jehovah, I will inquire and search; for it belongs to me to examine the hearts of men.''

We hence see that there is an implied reproof, when he says, that the heart is insidious and wicked; [432] as though he had said, ``Ye think yourselves in this instance wise; is not God also wise?'' Isaiah says ironically the same,

``Woe to them who go down to Egypt and make secret covenants, and who trust in horses, as though they could deceive me: ye are wise, I also have a portion of wisdom.'' (Isaiah 31:1)

Notice especially the expression, ``Ye are wise, etc.;'' that is, ``Ye are not alone wise; leave to me some portions of wisdom, so that I may be wise like yourselves.'' So also in this place, ``Ye are deceitful and insidious, and think that I can be deceived:'' for astute men are ever pleased with their own counsels, and seek to deceive God with mere trumperies. ``Ye are,'' he says, ``very cunning; but I, Jehovah, will search both your hearts and your reins.'' I cannot finish the whole to-day.

PRAYER

[432] The early versions and the Targum are neither consistent nor satisfactory as to the beginning of this verse: "Deep is the heart above all things, and it is man," Septuagint; "Depraved is the heart of all, and inscrutable," Fulgate; "Hard in heart is man above all things," Syriac; "The heart, deeper than anything, is human," Arabic; "Deceitful is the heart above all things, and it is strong." Targum. Correct, no doubt, is the first clause in the Targum, but not the last. Critics agree as to the first word, "deceitful," but not as to the word rendered in our version "desperately wicked." It occurs in all nine times, and four times in other parts of Jeremiah, (Jeremiah 15:18; Jeremiah 17:16; Jeremiah 30:12, 15) and it is rendered "incurable," except in Jeremiah 17:16. It means to be so bad as to be past endurance or past remedy. Blayney renders it here, "past all hope;" and Horsely, "incurable," which is perhaps the best word, — Deceitful the heart above every thing, And incurable it is, who can know it? The meaning is, that it is incurably deceitful; hence the question," Who can know it?" — Ed.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are wholly nothing and less than nothing, we may know our nothingness, and having cast away all confidence in the world as well as in ourselves, we may learn to flee to thee as suppliants, and so put our trust in thee for our present life and for eternal salvation, that thou alone mayest be glorified: and may we be devoted to thee through the whole course of our life, and so persevere in humility and in calling on thy name, that thou mayest not only for once bring us help, but that we may know that thou art always present with those who truly and from the heart call upon thee, until we shall at length be filled with the fullness of all those blessings, which are laid up for us in heaven by Christ our Lord --- Amen.

Lecture Sixty-Seventh

We began yesterday to explain that passage where the Prophet says, that the heart is insidious, or fallacious and wicked, so that no one can penetrate into those deceits which are concealed withill it. We referred to the Prophet's object in saying this, --- -that the Jews might know that their cunning was in vain, while they hid their thoughts as it were under the earth, that is, while they thought that by their false pretences they could deceive God as well as men.

He says then what he takes as granted, ``I know that you have a fallacious heart.'' This indeed they did not allow; for they made a specious pretext and boasted of their wisdom, and not of deceit and guile. But the Prophet speaks plainly and expresses the fact as it was, ``There is in you,'' he says, ``a fallacious and a wicked heart: hence is the confidence, which inebriates you; for ye think that your deceits cannot be discovered.'' Then in astonishment he asks, Who can search it? but the answer immediately follows, I --- I Jehovah; that is, ``It belongs to one to search the heart and the reins, and so nothing can escape me.'' [433] The meaning then is, that when men try to deceive God, they gain nothing, for God knows how to take the wise in their own craftiness, and to discover all their guiles and deceits. Then he adds for what end is this done, That I may render to every one according to his ways, according to the fruit of his works.

By these words he means that they, after having for a long time made many evasions, would yet be brought to judgment, willing or unwilling; for they could not possibly deprive God of his right, that he should not be the judge of the world, and thus render to each the reward of his own works: for the Prophet does not speak of merits or of virtues, but only shews that how much soever the ungodly might hide themselves, they could not yet escape the tribunal of God, but that they must at last render an account to him.

We may further gather from this passage a general truth, --- that the recesses of the heart are so hidden, that no judgment can be formed of man by any human being. We indeed know that there are appearances of virtue in many; but it belongs to God alone to search the hearts of men and to try the reins. Rashly then do many form an estimate of man's character according to their own apprehensions or the measure of their own knowledge; for the heart of man is ever false and deceitful. If

[433] The beginning of this verse is an answer to the previous question, “Who can know it?” The best rendering would be this, — I Jehovah, — who search the heart and try the reins, And that in order to give to every man According to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings. — Ed.

any one objects and says, that Jeremiah speaks of the Jews then living, there is an answer given by Paul,

``Whatsoever things are written in the Law pertain to all.'' (Romans 15:4.)

Described then is here the character of all mankind, until God regenerates his elect. As then there is no purity except from the Spirit of God, as long as mencontinue in their own nature, their hearts are full of deceits and frauds. So the fairest splendor is nothing but hypocrisy, which is abominable in the sight of God. Let us proceed ---

Jeremiah 17:11

11 As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.

11. Perdix quae congregat et non parit, qui facit (hoc est, acquirit, vel, comparat) divitias, idque non in judicio (id est, non recte) in medio dierum suorum relinquet illas, et in exitu suo erit nihili.

The Prophet no doubt intended only to shew that those who enriched themselves by unlawful means, or heaped together great wealth, would yet be subject to the curse of God, so that whatever they may have got through much toil and labor would vanish away from them; for God would empty them of all they possessed. There is therefore no ambiguity in the meaning of the Prophet, or in the subject itself. But as to the words, interpreters do not agree: the greater part, however, incline to this view, --- That as the partridge gathers the eggs of others, which she does not hatch, so also he who accumulates wealth, shall at length have nothing, for God will deprive him. But the passage seems to me to be plainly this, --- Whosoever makes, or procures or acquires, riches, and that not by right, that is, not rightly nor honestly, but by wicked and artful means, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at last shall be of no account, or shall be a mockery: for {נבל} nabal, means a thing of nought; some render it fool, and rightly, for so it often means.

But there is a similitude employed, As the partridge gathers eggs and produces not. To produce may be here explained in two ways; it may be applied to the pullets or to the eggs. Some consider the word, {קרא} kora, to be masculine: then it is, The partridge, that is, the male, gathers, or lays on eggs which he has not produced, or did not lay. But to produce may also mean to hatch. [434]

It may be now asked, how can this similitude be applied to the subject in hand? The Rabbins, according to their practice, have devised fables; for they imagine that the partridge steals all the eggs of other birds which she can find, and gathers them into one heap; and then that the pullets, when hatched, fly away, as by a certain hidden instinct, they understand that it is not their mother. But neither Aristotle nor

[434] It is evident from 1 Samuel 26:20, that the partridge is meant; and it appears from a quotation which Parkhurst makes from Buffon, under the word {,{קרא that the red partridge is referred to here; for the male of the red kind in eastern countries sits on eggs as well as the female. This explains what appears intricate in this passage; for the word is masculine, and the verbs are in the same gender. What is here stated respecting the partridge is what often happens, the nest being often disturbed; and then the eggs become useless. It is a case of this kind that is here referred to, --- A partridge sitting and not hatching, Is he who gets wealth, and not by right; In the midst of his day shall he leave it, And at his end shall be a fool. The reason why the partridge sits and hatches not, is intimated in the second clause, when it is said that the getter of wealth leaves it in the midst of his day: various things often compel the partridge to leave its eggs, such as dogs, cattle, etc.: and then nothing is brought forth. So the rich man is constrained to quit his wealth before he derives any benefit from it. This seems to be the comparison. --- Ed.

Pliny say any such thing of partridges. They indeed say that the bird is full of cunning, and mention several instances; but they refer to no such thing as that the partridge collects thus stealthily its eggs. These things then are fables, which it would be very absurd to believe. But it is said of partridges with one consent, by Aristotle and Pliny, as well as by others, that it is a very lustful bird. So great is their lust, that the males seek after the eggs, and lest the females should lay on them, they break them with their beaks or scatter them with their feet. There is also, as they say, great lust in the females, but a greater concern for their brood: they therefore hide their eggs, except when lust at times compels them to return to the males; and then they lay their eggs in their presence; and the male, when it finds an egg, breaks it with his feet. Hence great is the difficulty to protect the brood; for before the female hatches the eggs, they are often forced out by the male. I doubt not therefore but that the real meaning of the Prophet is this, --- that while partridges so burn with love to their brood, they are at the same time led away by their own lust, and that while they conceal their eggs, the male cunningly steals them, so that their labor proves useless. Now the Prophet says, ``that all those who accumulate riches in an unjust manner are like partridges; for they are compelled to leave riches unlawfully got in the midst of their days.'' [435] The purport of the whole is, that whosoever seeks to become rich by means of injustice and wrong, will be exposed to the curse of God, so that at last he will not enjoy his ill-gotten wealth.

If any one will object and say, that many who are avaricious, perfidious and rapacious, do enioy their riches: I answer, that there is no true enjoyment, when there is no use made of them and no security for them. If we duly consider how the avaricious possess what they have plundered, we shall find that they always gape for more plunder and are like the partridges; for they lay clogs as it were, and yet no fruit appears. Before any fruit is brought forth, or at least before it comes to them, they become destitute in the midst of their days. And though God permits them to hold hidden riches, yet they derive, as it is well known, no benefit from them: nay, their cupidity, as it is insatiable, is a dropsy; for they are always thirsty; and the very mass of wealth so inflames their avarice, that the richest of them has less than he who is contented with a moderate and even with a small fortune. It is then certain, that those who, even to death, possess ill-gotten wealth, do not yet really enjoy it; for they always lay on their eggs, and yet, as I have said, they derive no benefit. And then the more remarkable judgment of God may be noticed; for in a moment the richest are reduced to the extremes of poverty; and though they think to make their children happy by leaving them a large patrimony, they yet leave them nothing but what proves to be snares to them all their life, and turns to their ruin. However this may be, experience sufficiently proves the truth of the old proverb, ``What is in-got is in-spent.'' And this is what the Prophet means, when he compares to partridges those who accumulate riches, not by right, as he says.

[435] There are many MSS. and the marginal reading, in favor of “days” for “day:” but the latter is more poetical: man’s day is his life. “A fool,” — so the versions, and more suitable here than any other word: he will then appear to all to have acted foolishly and not wisely; and he will find himself to have so acted, though he thought himself before to be very wise. Some consider the word to be a proper name, Nabal, whose history we have in 1 Samuel 25:10-39; and they render the line thus, — And at his end shall be a Nabal. — Ed.

An exception is to be here noticed; for a just man may become rich, as God made Abraham rich; but he became not rich by frauds and plunder and cruelty: the blessing of God made him rich. But they who by wrong and injustice accumulate wealth must necessarily at length be destroyed by God.

He says first, In the midst of his days shall he leave them; that is, even while he has money shut up in his chest, while he has his granaries and his cellars full, even then his wealth shall vanish away. We see that where there is the greatest abundance, the master himself is hungry and famishing; he cannot cat so as to satisfy his hunger, while he could feed hundreds. Thus then his wealth disappears and vanishes in his hands, he afterwards adds, at his end he will be nothing, or he will be a mockery, or he will be a fool. The world indeed esteems those alone wise, who are provident, who are attentive to their own gain, and who plunder on every side, and tenaciously hold what has once come to their hands; but the Lord here condemns them all for their folly and vanity. I think, at the same time, that the slaves of money are here called men of nought and contemptible. It follows: ---

Jeremiah 17:12

12. A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.

12. Soilum gloriae excelsum (vel, celsitudo; {מרום} enim tam adjective capitur, quam substantive) ab initio locus sanctuarii nostri.

No doubt the Prophet refers to the singular favor which God granted the Jews, when he chose for himself an habitation among them. It was an incomparable honor when God was pleased to dwell in the midst of that people. Hence, the Prophet exclaims, that the throne of glory and of loftiness was the place of his sanctuary, which God had chosen in that land. But we must understand the design of the Prophet; for the Holy Spirit sometimes commemorates the blessings of God, to raise the minds of men to confidence, or to rouse them to make sacrifices of praise. Here is then a twofold object, when the Scripture sets before us the blessings of God; it is first, that we may be fully persuaded, that he will be always a father to us, for he who begins is wont to bring his work to an end, according to what is said in Psalm 138:8,

``The work of thine hands thou wilt not forsake.''

And then, the Scripture sometimes encourages us to render thanks to God, when it shews how bountifully he has dealt with us. But here is a reproof when the Prophet says, that the glorious throne of God was among the Jews, as though God appeared there openly and in a visible form; for Judea, so to speak, was as it were a terrestrial heaven; for God had consecrated to himself mount Sion, that he might dwell there.

We now then understand why the Prophet here extols the dignity to which God had raised the Jews, when he had commanded a temple for himself to be built on mount Sion. Some will have a particle of comparison to be understood, ``As a throne of glory;'' that is, as heaven itself in height, so is the place of our sanctuary; but we may take the words simply as they are. We must at the same time repudiate the Rabbinical comment, --- that God before the creation of the world had built the temple, as he had appointed the Messiah and other things. But these are foolish trifles. Yet this passage has afforded the Jews an occasion for labling; for it is said from the beginning, {מראשון} merashun. If the throne of God, that is, the sanctuary, [they

say] was from the beginning, it then follows that it was created before heaven and earth. But this is disproved by this single consideration, --- that he speaks not here of time but of the order of things, and that that order is; not according to the essence of things, but according to the providence of God. From the beginning, then was the throne of God glorious in Judea, even because God in his eternal counsel had determined to choose the race of Abraham, and then to raise up in that nation the throne of David, and from thence to extend salvation to the whole world. [436] Predestination therefore is the antiquity of the throne of which the Prophet now speaks. Hence the most suitable view is this, --- that God had honored the Jews with a singular privilege, because he had purposed to dwell among them, not otherwise than in heaven, so that their condition became more excellent than all human glory. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 17:13

13. O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.

13. Spes (vel, expectatio) Israel Jehova, quicunque abs te discedunt (vel, qui te derelinquunt, {עזבוך}; hoc verbo nuper fuerat usus de perdicibus loquens) pudefient; qui deficiunt a me in terra scribentur; quia dereliquerunt (idem est verbum) fontem aquarum viventium Jehovam.

It appears more clear from this verse why the Prophet had commended before the excellency of his own nation, even that by the comparison their impiety might appear less excusable; for the more bountiful God had dealt with them, the more atrocious was their sin of ingratitude. As then the Jews had been raised high, so that their elevation appeared eminent through the whole world, the more detestable became their contumacy against God, and also their ingratitude in rejecting and despising a favor so remarkable, when they forsook him and followed idols, vain hopes, and their own false counsels. It is the same as though the Prophet had said, --- ``What does it avail you, that God dwells among you, and that the Temple is as it were his earthly habitation, where he converses familiarly with you? what benefit is this to you? for no one accepts of this favor; nay, we wilfully, and as it were designedly cast away from us this kindness which is freely offered to us.''

We hence see that all this ought to be read together, --- that the throne of God was in Judea, but that the people in the meantime malignantly and wickedly rejected the favor offered them.

But the Prophet turns to God, that he might rouse the Jews, for such was their perverseness that he in vain taught them. And he says, Jehovah, the expectation of Israel! whosoever forsake thee shall be made ashamed; as though he had said, --- ``The ungodly multitude which accepts not the dignity by which our race excels all other nations, receives no benefit. God indeed dwells in the midst of us, but hardly one in a hundred cleaves to him; nay, almost all treacherously forsake him;

[436] If we connect "from the beginning" with the following words, and not with "high," which seems to give a better meaning, we shall get rid of the Rabbinical figment; and it seems also right to join with this verse the first words in the next, as it has been done by the Septuagint, — A throne of glory on high, Is from the beginning the place of our sanctuary, — The hope of Israel. Or we may render the first line thus, — The glorious throne of the most high. For so we find {{מרום rendered in Psalm 56:2. --- Ed.

but notwithstanding all their glory, they shall be made ashamed who thus reject the kindness of God.'' The Prophet, in short, reminds the Jews how vainly and presumptuously they gloried, because God had adopted their race; for a reciprocity was required, so that they were to respond to God and receive his benefits. But when they perversely his favor, what could have remained for them?

Hence he says, Ashamed shall all they be made who forsake thee. By the word forsake, he intimates that the Jews had been favored by God; for this could not have been said in the same sense, and in an equal degree of the heafilens, as the heathens had never been gathered by God into one body; but the Jews alone had enjoyed this favor. When therefore he had manifested himself to them, and testified that he would be their Father, he was forsaken by them. This defection, of which the Jews alone were guilty, is noticed, because God had sought them for himself; he had also come to them, and made with them a covenant. As then they were thus brought nigh to God, this defection was the more execrable. This is what the Prophet means.

He now adds, And they who depart shall be written in the earth. Literally it is, ``Who depart from me;'' but the {י}, iod, at the end, as many think, is a servile letter. And some think that the word is a verb, and that the {י}, iod, at the beginning denotes the future tense, and they regard the {י}, iod, at the end to be for {ו}, vau, {יסודו} isuru, ``Who depart.'' Others suppose it to be a noun, and read {יסורי} isuri, for {וסורים} vasurim [437] As to the meaning, it is evident that the Prophet designed here to shake off from the Jews the vain glory with which they were inflated, when they boasted that they were the people of God, the holy race of Abraham, the royal priesthood; all these things he ridicules as vain, as though he had said, --- ``Away with all these boastings, which are all false; ye are apostates, therefore your name shall be written in the earth.'' No doubt, the earth here is set in opposition to heaven; and Scripture sometimes says, that the name of the wicked shall be a reproach on earth. But as they often acquire a celebrated and honorable name on earth, the Prophet makes a concession and says, ``Be it so; let the world regard you as the holy race of Abraham, the blessed seed and the chosen people; let, in short, every one of you claim for himself whatever he pleases, but your name shall be on earth, and shall be blotted out from heaven; there will be no inheritance above for you, no portion in the kingdom of God.'' He in short intimates, that the Jews would have no place before God and his angels, for they were unworthy that God shouhi regard them as his children, since they had wickedly denied him. He then grants them a name on earth; but it is the, same as though he had said, that they wickedly lied in boasting that they were a chosen people, since they themselves, as far as they could, obliterated the election of God.

He afterwards adds, Because they have forsaken Jehovah, the fountain of living waters. The Prophet confirms what he had said, lest the Jews should think that

[437] The reading of the Keri and of many MSS. is no doubt to be adopted, and the final {ם} as is sometimes the case, is dropped. It would then be, according to the Septuagint, {וסורים} Our version is the Vulgate. I would connect ``earth'' or land with this word, --- And apostates in the land shall they be recorded. This would be their designation; they were to be handed down to posterity as apostates in the very land which God gave them. The reason why the {ם} is dropped is the connection of the word with ``land,'' though preceded by {ב} --- Ed

they were too severely rebuked, when he said that their name was blotted out from heaven: Ye have forsaken, he says, the fountain of living waters. ``What does this mean? God (according to what is said in Jeremiah 2) manifested himself to you; is there not in him a full and sufficient happiness for you? What more can be sought for by a mortal man than to enjoy his God, in whom there is the fullness of all blessings? God has offered himself to you, and his bounty has ever been extended to you, as though he were a fountain from which you might draw enough to satisfy you; but ye have forsaken this fountain. You must therefore perish through thirst, and justly so, for your ingratitude has been so great as to despise these remarkable and invaluable favors of God.'' It now follows ---

Jeremiah 17:14

14. Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.

14. Sana me Jehova, et sanabor; serva me, et salvus ero; quia laus mea tu es.

Here the Prophet, as though terrified, hides himself under the wings of God, for he saw that apostasy and every kind of wickedness prevailed everywhere throughout the land; he saw that the principal men of his nation were wicked despisers of God, and that they vainly boasted of their own descent, while yet destitute of all care for justice and uprightness. When therefore he saw that the land was thus infected, in order that fainting might not overcome him, he presents himself to God, as though he had said, ``What shall become of me, Lord? for I am here surrounded with wickedness; wherever I turn I find nothing but what allures and leads me away from true religion and the sincere worship of thy name. What then will be the case if thou forsakest me? I shall be immediately seized, and it will be all over with me, for there is no safety in the whole land, and no healing, it is as though pestilence prevailed, so that no one can go forth lest he should meet with some contagion.'' Thus the Prophet in this passage, on seeing the whole land so polluted with crimes that there was not a corner free from them, flees to God for help, and says, ``O Lord, I cannot be safe except thou keep me; I cannot be pure except my purity comes from time.'' We now understand the design of the Prophet, and how this verse is connected with the preceding verses.

He says first, Heal me, and I shall be healed; as though he had said that he was now diseased, having contracted a taint from corrupt practices. He therefore seeks healing from God alone, and through his gracious help. And for the same reason he adds that then only he should be safe when saved by God.

We are taught by these words, that whenever stumbling-blocks come in our way, we ought to call on God with increasing ardor and earnestness. For every one of us must well know his own infirmity; even when we have not to fight, our own weakness does not suffer us to stand uncorrupted; how then will it be with us, when Satan assails our faith with his most cunning devices? While therefore we now see all things in the world in a corrupted state, so that we are allured by a thousand things from the true worship of God, let us learn by the example of the Prophet to hide ourselves under the wings of God, and to pray that he may heal us, for we shall not only be apparently vicious, but many corruptions will immediately devour us,

except God himself bring us help. Hence the worse the world is, and the greater the licentiousness of sin, the more necessity there is for praying God to keep us by his wonderful power, as it were in the very regions of hell.

A general truth may be also gathered from this passage, that it is not in man to stand or to keep himself safe, so as to be preserved, but that this is the peculiar kindness of God; for if man had any power to preserve himself, so as to continue pure and unpolluted in the midst of corruptions, no doubt, Jeremiah would have been endued with such a gift; but he confesses that there is no hope of healing and of salvation, except through the special favor of God. For what else is healing but purity of life? as though he had said, ``O Lord, it is not in me to preserve that integrity which thou requirest:'' and hence he says, Heal me, and I shall be healed. And then, when he speaks of salvation, he no doubt intended to testify, that it is not enough for the Lord to help us once or for a short time, except he continues to help us to the end. Therefore the beginning, as well as the whole progress of salvation, is here ascribed by him to God. It hence follows that all that the sophists vainly talk about free-will is reduced to nothing. They indeed confess that it is not in man's power to stave himself; but they afterwards pull down and subvert what they seem to confess, for they say that the grace of the Spirit concurs with free-will, and that man saves himself while God is co-operating with him. But all this is mere trifling; for the Prophet here not only implores help, and prays God to succor his infirmity, but he confesses that it is God's work alone to heal and to save him.

And this he further confirms by saying, Thou art my praise; [438] for he thus declares that he effected nothing, but that all the praise for his salvation was due alone to God; for how can God be said to be our Praise, except when we glory in him alone? according to what is said in the ninth chapter. If men claim even the least thing for themselves, they cannot call God their praise. The Prophet then acknowledges here that he contributed nothing towards the preservation of his purity, but that this was wholly the work of God. And then he confirms his own hope, as he doubted not but he would be heard by God, for he asks of him whatever was necessary for his salvation.

We have then this general rule, that if we desire to obtain from him the beginning and the end of our salvation, his praise must be given to him, so that we may glory in him alone. If then we own ourselves destitute of all power, and flee to God under the consciousness of such a want, we shall doubtless obtain whatever is needful for us; but if we are inflated with the conceit of our own power, or of our own righteousness, the door is closed against us. We now then see the benefit of this confirmation; it assures the faithful that they shall find in God whatever they may want, for they do not obscure the glory of God by transferring to themselves what peculiarly belongs to him, but confess that in him dwells what they cannot find in themselves. The rest I defer till to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that we may learn, whether in want or in abundance, so to

[438] Both the object and the ground of praise: Thou art he whom I praise or glorify; or, Thou art he who givest me an occasion to praise. "Thou art my boasting ({καύχημα},") is the Septuagint. --- Ed.

submit ourselves to thee, that it may be our only and perfect felicity to depend on thee and to rest in that salvation, the experience of which thou hast already given us, until we shall reach that eternal rest, where we shall enjoy it in all its fullness, when made partakers of that glory, which has been procured for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son.--Amen.

Lecture Sixty-Eighth

Jeremiah 17:15

15. Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of the LORD? let it come now.

15. Ecce ipsi dicunt mihi, Ubi est sermo Jehovae? veniat nunc.

Here Jeremiah complains of the obstinate contempt of the people; he found them not only uncourteous but even petulant towards God, so that they hesitated not to discredit all prophecies, to despise the promises, and boldly to reject all threatenings. The Prophet had often threatened them; and when God delayed the time, they made a wrong use of his forbearance, as it is commonly the case with the reprobate. Nor did they deem it enough even to add sins to sins, but they openly and petulantly provoked God, ``Where is the word? many years have now elapsed since thou hast continually spoken of war, of famine, and of pestilence; but we still remain quiet, and God spares us; where then is the word of Jehovah, which thou hast announced?''

We now then see how great was the wilfulness of this people, for the teaching of Jeremiah became not only useless but was treated with ridicule. They had however heard much before from the mouth of Isaiah,

``Alas! when the Lord calls you to ashes and sackcloth, ye say, ``Let us eat and drink, to-morrow we shall die.'' ``As I live, saith the Lord, not forgiven to you shall be this iniquity.''

(Isaiah 22:12-14.)

God then had sworn by his own glory that their sin would be inexpiable, because they continued obstinately in their vices, and were in no degree terrified by the threatenings of the prophets. We however see that they ever became worse and worse. Isaiah was dead when they thus spoke in contempt and mockery, Where is the word of Jehovah? let it now come, as though they designedly provoked God, like one who despises his enemy, and says, ``Oh! thou art indeed to be dreaded, if thou art to be believed; let us now see thy power, shew to us what thou canst do.'' Thus contemptibly did they utter their scoffs, when God by his servants made known to them the approaching ruin which they deserved. We see, in short, that the Prophet shews here that they had come to a hopeless state. [439] It follows ---

Jeremiah 17:16

16. As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee.

16. Ego autem non festinavi, ut essem pastor post te, et diem doloris non concupivi, tu nosti: quod egressum est e labiis meis, coram facie tua fuit.

The Prophet here implores God as his defender, having found his own nation so

[439] The Targum thus paraphrases the verse, — Behold they say to me "Where is what thou hast prophesied in the name of the Lord? let it be now confirmed." Their language was similar to that of those mentioned in 2 Peter 3:4. — Ed.

refractory, that they could in no way be brought to a right mind. There is yet no doubt but he intended to double their fear in thus testifying that he brought nothing of his own, but faithfully executed the command of God, that he did not presumptuously undertake the office of a teacher, but obeyed the call of God, as though he had said, that they (as we shall find in another place) did not resist a mortal man, but God himself. He therefore refers the matter to God, as though he had said, ``Contend with God; for what have I to do with you, or you with me? For I do not plead my own cause, nor came I forth through any desire of my own; but as God has committed to me this office, it was necessary for me to obey. As then I am only the instrument of God, what will you at last gain after having quarrelled ever so much? No doubt God will shew that he is an adversary to you, and can ye conquer him?'' We now understand the object of the Prophet.

But we have said elsewhere that the Prophet fled to God when he found no equity or rectitude in the world; yea, when all were deaf and so blinded that there was no hope of obtaining notice. When therefore men are thus perverted in their minds, we must necessarily have recourse to God. So the Prophet does now, as he had done before, leaving men he addresses his words to God; and this kind of apostrophe has more force than if he had charged them with perverseness.

But I, he says, I have not hastened. Here interpreters differ; for {אוץ}, auts, means sometimes to hasten, and sometimes to be slow, two contrary things. It signifies also to be careful and to abominate or to dislike; and so some render it here, ``I have not disliked, so as not to become a pastor;'' for {מן} men, in Hebrew is often taken as a negative. Others give this version, ``I have not been careful,'' or anxious, ``I have not cared to become a pastor.'' But a meaning more suitable to the context may be given to the words, that the Prophet hastened not, for it follows, and I have not coveted. These two expressions, {אצתי} {לא} la atsati, hastened,'' and, {התאויתי} {לא} la ethaviti, correspond the one with the other, I have not hastened,'' and ``I have not coveted;'' and both is a denial of his temerity. Many indeed thrust themselves, as we shall see in the twenty-third chapter, without being called by God; they run of themselves, and are led astray by foolish imaginations.

The Prophet says first, that he had not hastened to be a pastor after God, literally; for many are ruled by ambition, which leads them to undertake more than what is right for them, and they do not regard what may please God. Hence the Prophet says in the first place, that he had not hastened, and then that he had not coveted, which is not different in meaning, but is a confirmation of the same thing. But let us first bear in mind that he thus proves the impiety of the people, for they fought against God himself the author of his call. How so? had he hastened, that is, had he through foolish zeal obtruded himself, the Jews might have justly contended with him, and might have done so with impunity; but as he had waited for the call of God, they had no ground to contend with him, and by opposing the servant of God, they discovered their own impiety. [440]

[440] It is singular how variously the early versions and the Targum have rendered the first half of this verse. Various, too, have been the opinions of critics. The first verb means to hasten, in a transitive, and in an intransitive sense, to urge, and to be urgent, forward, or hasty. It is used here evidently intransitively. Then the literal rendering seems to be this, — But I have not

Jeremiah prescribes here a law for all prophets and teachers, and that is, that they are not to aspire to this office as many do, who, as we have already said, are guided by ambition. He then alone is to be deemed a lawful minister and prophet of God and a teacher in his church who is not led by the impulse of his own flesh, nor by inconsiderate zeal, but to whom God extends his hand, and who being called obeys. The beginning then is obedience, if we wish to become lawful teachers. This is one thing.

In the second place he shews, that those who are called to the office of teaching are not endued with a sovereign power, so that they can announce whatever pleases them, but that they are pastors for God. God indeed would have his prophets to take the lead, so as to point out the way to the rest of the people, and he thus honors them with no common dignity. He would have them to be heads or leaders, or ensign-bearers, but still he himself retains his own peculiar honor; hence no one ever so presides over God's Church as to be the chief pastor, for God takes away nothing from himself by transferring the office of teaching to his ministers, but on the contrary he remains complete in his own authority. In short, he does not resign, as they say, his own right, but substitutcs those who teach in his own place, and in such a way as still to retain what peculiarly belongs to him. Hence these words ought to be carefully noticed, I have not hastened to become a pastor after thee, that is, that he might follow God. Whosoever then takes so much liberty as not to follow God, but is carried away by his own spirit, is to be repudiated, and deserves not to be reckoned among lawful pastors.

But this passage seems to militate against what is declared by Paul when he says, that he who desires the episcopate seeks an excellent work. (1 Timothy 3:1.) Paul does not there condemn, it is said, the desire, he only reminds us how difficult and arduous is the office of a bishop. To this we may readily answer, that Paul there does not speak of that foolish ardor by which many are inflamed, while they do not consider their own abilities, or rather their own weakness; but he says, that if any offers himself to God for the office of teaching, he is to think and duly to consider that it is no common work. He ought then rather to restrain himself, while bearing in mind how difficult it is to fulfill all the duties of a good bishop. But Jeremiah here refers to what we have seen in the first chapter, for he even dreaded the prophetic office, and confessed that he was not able to speak. As then he alleged his own stammering, he was very far from having any corrupt desire. There is then nothing inconsistent in the words, that Jeremiah did not desire the office of a pastor, and that whosoever desires the episcopate desires an excellent, work.

He now adds a confirmation, The day of grief, he says, have I not desired. Some think the verb to be passive, but I have rendered it with others as an active verb, yet some read, ``And the day of affliction, or of sorrow, has not been wished for by

been more forward than a pastor after thee, or following thee. The meaning seems to be, that he did not exceed his commission; and this is confirmed by the latter part of the verse. The preposition {{מן has often the meaning of ``more than,'' or above. The word ``woeful'' is the same with what is rendered ``desperately wicked'' in Jeremiah 17:9. Its meaning is, to be bad beyond recovery; and when applied to day, it may be properly rendered ``irretrievable.'' I thus render the two lines, --- But I --- I have not been forwarder than a pastor following thee, And the irretrievable day have I not desired. This day was the day of exile which he had foretold. Then the words, ``thou knowest,'' stand connected with what follows. --- Ed.

me.'' But there is, in reality, no difference. He confirms what he had said, for he saw clearly, when God chose him a Prophet, that he would be drawn into hard contests; ``Why, he says, should I covet the prophetic office? It would have been an insane ambition.'' He found out from the very beginning the consequence of undertaking the office, that he had to contend with the whole people, yea, with every one of them, ``I knew how great would be their stubbornness, and how great also would be their cruelty; how then could I have wished of mine own accord to run into danger, and to throw mysdf into so many troubles and so many sorrows?'' Jeremiah then shews from what he had apprehended as to the issue, that he had not, been led by any hasty desire.

If one objects and says, that many are notwithstanding led away by a foolish ambition to undergo dangers and troubles which they cannot but foresee. To this I answer, that the Prophet assumes the fact as it was, that not only known to him from the beginning was whatever he after-wards experienced, for he had well considered what the people were, but that he had been also constrained by God's command to renounce his own will. Many hasten because they consider not the difficulties of the office, hardly one in a hundred at this day duly considers how difficult and arduous it is rightly to discharge the pastoral office. Hence many are led to undertake it as an easy duty, and of no great importance. Afterwards experience too late teaches them, that they have foolishly desired what was unknown to them. Some think that they possess great skill and activity, and also promise themselves great things on account of their own capacities, learning, and judgment; but they afterwards very soon find how scanty is a furniture, as they say, of this kind, for aptness for the work fails them at the very outset, and not in the middle of their course. Some also, while seeing that they are to have many and grievous contests, dread nothing and put on an iron front, as though they were born to fight. Others there are who, in desiring the office of teachers, are mercenaries. We indeed know that all God's servants are miserable as to this world, and according to the perceptions of men, for they must carry on war against the prevailing dispositions of all, and thus displease men that they may please God; but mercenaries, who have no religion and adulterate God's word, desire the office, and why? because they see that they can deal in a pleasing manner with men, for they will carefully avoid everything that may offend, But this was not the case with the Prophet; hence he assumes, as I have said, this fact, that he sincerely engaged in his office of teaching, and was not induced by any other motive than that of promoting the well-being of the people.

He say's that he hastened not; how so? ``I should have been,'' he says, ``altogether insane had I been led by an inconsiderate zeal, for I know that I should have to contend, and to contend not with one man only, but with the whole people, yea, with every one of them.'' Hence he calls the warfare which awaits all true pastors, the day of sorrow, for if they please men they cannot be the servants of God. And of this fact he makes God a witness, Thou knowest. Men of wind profess boldly enough that they have nothing in view but to serve God, that they do not rashly enter on their course; but the Prophet here sets himself in God's presence, and is not anxious

to secure the approbation of men, being content with that of God alone. [441]

And then he adds, Before thy face has been whatever has proceeded from my lips. By these words he intimates, that he had not vainly spoken whatever came to his mind, but what he had received from God himself, and that before God was everything which had proceeded from his mouth. We hence learn, that it is not enough for one to have been once called, except he faithfully delivers what he has received from God himself, It now follows ---

Jeremiah 17:17-18

17. Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil.

17. Ne sis mihi in terrorem; protectio mea tu in die mali.

18. Let them be confounded that persecute me, but let not me be confounded: let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed: bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.

18. Pudefiant qui persequuntur me, et non pudetiam ego; terreantur illi, et non terrear ego; inducas super eos diem mali, et duplici contritione contere eos.

Now the Prophet, having appealed to God as a witness to his integrity, prays him to show himself as his patron and defender. Thus he again implores God's aid, Be not thou, he says, a terror to me, that is, ``Suffer me not while pleading thy cause to be terrified.'' Thy the word, terror, he means such a dread as stupifies all the feelings. It would have indeed been wholly unreasonable for the Prophets to fail in constancy and firmness, for it belonged to God to rule them by his Spirit, and to support them by his grace, from the time he committed to them their office. Since then no one is of himself fit to discharge the duties of a faithful teacher, God must: necessarily succor and aid those whom he calls and sends to the work. This is now what the Prophet speaks of when he says, Be not to me a terror, that is, ``Be not to me a cause of dread by depriving me of constancy and firmness, so as to render me an object of ridicule to all;'' and why? because thou art my protection, or my hope, for the word means both.

Thou art then my protection (of this meaning I mostly approve) in the day of evil, that is, ``I have chosen thee as my protector, as though thou were a shield to me; as then I have promised myself the favor of having thee as my help, see that I be not left destitute, since I have to right for thee and under thy banner.'' Hence he adds, Ashamed let them be who persecute me, and let not me be ashamed; terrified let them be, and let not me be terrified

The Prophet, as we have seen, had a hard contest, not only with one man or with a few, but with the whole people, and then it is probable that there were many sects, for when he cried against the avaricious, there was a commotion instantly made by all those who lived on plunder, when he spoke against the indulgence of lust, there was a second conspiracy against him; when he condemned drunkenness and intemperance, there was a new combination formed to oppose him. We hence see how all the ungodly in all parts and for various reasons assailed the Prophet, he was therefore constrained to pray, as he now does, Ashamed let them be who persecute

[441] The Targum connects “thou knowest” with what follows; and such is the version of Blayney, and more suitable it is to the passage, — Thou knowest what has gone forth from my lips, Before thy face has it been.— Ed.

me, even because they now testified that they were evidently the enemies of God, for he had no private concern with them, but faithfully obeyed the command of God. As then he knew them to be God's avowed enemies, he hesitated not to ask God himself to oppose them. [442]

We must yet notice what we have said in other places, that the Prophet was not only influenced by a holy and pious zeal, but was also governed by the wisdom of the Spirit. This I again repeat, for there are many foolish imitators, who always appeal to the vehemence which the Prophets shewed, while they themselves are carried away by a violent rather than by a vehement impulse. But we must first see whether the Holy Spirit guides us, lest we should utter imprecations against the very elect; and then we must beware of being influenced by the feelings of our flesh, and intemperate zeal is ever to be feared, for it is a rare gift so to burn with zeal as to join with it the moderation that is required. As then there is always something turbulent in our zeal, we must remember that the Prophets never uttered a word but as the Spirit guided their tongues, and then that they had no regard to themselves, and, thirdly, that they were so calm and composed in their ardor that they were not, guilty of excess.

The Prophet no doubt fully knew that all those were reprobate on whom he imprecated God's vengeance, but as it does not belong to us to distinguish between the elect and the reprobate, let us learn to suspend and check our zeal, so that it may not be too fervid, for we may often mistake, if we follow generally what the Prophet says here, Bring on them the day of evil, and with a double breach break them. Were we thus to speak indiscriminately of all, our zeal would often hit the very children of God. We must therefore bear in mind, that before the Prophet uttered this imprecation he was taught by the Spirit of God that he had to do with reprobate and irreclaimable men. Now a new discourse follows ---

Jeremiah 17:19-21

19. Thus said the LORD unto me; Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem;

19. Sic dixit mihi Jehova, Vade et sta in porta filiorum populi; per quam ingrediuntur reges Jehudah, et per quam egrediuntur, (ad verbum, e qua egrediuntur in ipsa; sed {ובו} est supervacuum,) et onmibus portis Jerusalem:

20. And say unto them, Hear ye the word of the LORD, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates:

20. Et dic illis, Audite sermonem Jehovae, reges Jehudah, et totus Jehudah, et omnes incolae Jerusalem, qui ingredimini per has portas

21. Thus saith the LORD, Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem.

[442] I would render Jeremiah 17:18 thus, — 18. Ashamed let my persecutors be, That I may not be ashamed; Dismayed let them be, That I may not be dismayed; Bring on them the day of evil, And doubly with breaking break them. There was a contest between the Prophet and his enemies; the shame and dismay of his enemies would deliver him from shame and dismay. The copulative {ו may often be rendered that, ut. The two last lines refer to the two preceding couplets in an inverted order. ``The day of evil'' was to dismay his enemies, and ``the breaking'' was to make them ashamed. The breaking was that of the spirit or of the heart; it means sorrow, trouble, such as brings men to a state of helplessness; it does not mean destruction. The line may be thus rendered, --- And doubly with depression depress them. The word doubly, means what is extreme. --- Ed.

21. Sic dicit Jehova, Custodite vos, (vel, cavete vobis,) in animabus vestris, ne inferatis onus die sabbathi, (ne tollatis,) et inferatis per portas Jerusalem.

This discourse is no doubt to be separated from the preceding one, and whosoever divided the chapters was deficient in judgment as to many other places as well as here. Now the meaning is, that so great and so gross was the contempt of the law, that they neglected even the observance of the Sabbath; and yet we know that hypocrites are in this respect very careful, nay, Isaiah upbraided the men of his day that they made so much of their sanctity to consist in the outward observance of days. (Isaiah 1:13.) But, as I have already said, the Jews were so audacious in the time of Jeremiah that they openly violated the Sabbath, men were become so lost, as we commonly say, as not to pretend any religion. The licentiousness of the people was so great that they had no shame; nay, they all openly shewed that they had wholly cast away the yoke of God and of his law. When this was the case at Jerusalem, wlmt can we think was done in obscure villages where so much religion did not exist? for if there was any right teaching, if there was any appearance of religion, it must have been at Jerusalem.

We now then see that the Prophet was sent by God to charge the people with this gross and base contempt of the law; as though he had said, ``Go to now, and pretend that you retain at least some religion: yet even in this small matter, the observance of the Sabbath, ye are deficient, for ye bring burdens, that is, ye carry on business on the Sabbath as on other days. As then there is not among you even an external sanctity as to the Sabbath, why do you go on with your evasions? for your impiety is sufficiently proved.'' We now see what the Prophet means, and what the import of this discourse is which we are now to explain.

He says first, that he was sent, go, to bring this message. He had been indeed chosen before a prophet; but he speaks here of a special thing which he was commissioned to do: and he says that he was sent to the chief gate of the city, through which the kings entered in and went out and the whole people [443] and then that he was sent to all the gates. By these words he means, that it was not God's will that the profanation of the Sabbath should be partially made known, but be everywhere proclaimed, in order that he might shame not only the king but also the whole people. The prophets usually spoke first in the Temple, and then they went to the gates, where there was a larger concourse of people. But Jeremiah had here something unusual; for God intended most clearly to condemn the Jews for their base and inexcusable contempt of the Sabbath.

He then adds, Thou shalt say to them, Hear the word of Jehovah, ye kings of Judah, and let all the people hear, and let all the citizens of Jerusalem hear, who enter in at these gates. The Prophet was commanded to begin with the king himself, who ought to have repressed so great a licentiousness. It was therefore an intolerable indifference in the king silently to bear this contempt of religion, especially in a matter so

[443] There is a peculiarity in the phraseology of the original as to the relative "which," after "the gate of the city;" literally it is, "which they enter through it the kings of Judah, and which they go out through it." In Welsh there is exactly the same form of expression, — Yr hwn yr a trwyddo frenhinoedd Iwda, etc. Had this been the Welsh version, it would have been literally the Hebrew, and more consonant than the present version with the idiom of the language. — Ed.

easy and so evident; for he could not have pretended that he was unacquainted with it: it was indeed the same as though the Jews intended to triumph against God, and to shew that his law was deemed of no value. Hence the profanation of the Sabbath was a proof of their shamelessness, as they thereby shewed that they cared nothing either for God or for his law. We shall hereafter see how great that wickedness was; but; I shall defer the subject, as I cannot now discuss it at large, and a more convenient opportunity will offer itself.

He bids them to attend, or to beware in their souls. Some render the words, ``As your souls are precious to you.'' But I take souls, not for their lives, but for the affections of their hearts; as though he had said, ``Take heed carefully of yourselves, that this may be laid up in your inmost heart.'' The word {נפש} nuphesh, means often the heart, the seat of the affections. It is said in Deuteronomy 4:15,

``Take heed to yourselves, {לנפשותיכם} lanupheshuticam,

to your souls.''

here it is, {בנפשותיכם}, benupheshuticam, ``in your souls;'' but there, ``to'' or ``for your souls,'' as also in Joshua 23:11. But the same thing is meant, and that is, that they were to take great heed, to take every care, to exert every effort, and, in short, every faculty of their souls. Take heed then carefully, [444] he says, take heed with every thought and faculty of your soul, that ye carry no burden on the Sabbath-day, and that ye bring it not through the gates of Jerusalem. It was a thing not difficult to be observed; and further, it was a most shameless transgression of the law; for, as I have said, by this slight matter they shewed that they despised the law of God, while yet the observance of the Sabbath was a thing of great importance: it was important in itself, but to observe it was easy. Hence appeared the twofold impiety of the people, --- because they despised God's singular favor, of which the seventh day was an evidence; and, because they were unwilling to take rest on that day, and in so easy a matter, they hesitated not, as it were, to insult God, as it has been before said.

Hence we ought to notice also what he says in these words, Carry no burden, and bring it not through the gatesof Jerusalem: and this was emphatically added; for it was not lawful even in the fields or in desert places to do anything on the Sabbath; but it was extremely shameful to carry a burden through the gates of Jerusalem; it was as though they wished publicly to reproach and despise God. Jerusalem was a public place; and it was as though one was not content privately to do dishonor to his neighbor or his brother, but must shew his ill-nature openly and in the light of day. Thus the Jews were not only reproachful towards God, but also dared to shew their impiety in his own renowned city, and, in short, in his very sanctuary. The rest we must defer.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast not only in former times sent thy prophets, but makest the testimony of thy will to be declared to us daily, --- O grant, that we may learn to render ourselves teachable and submissive to thee, and so willingly

[444] "Guard ye your souls" is the version of the Septuagint, Vulgate, and the Targum; but that of the Syriac is, "Take heed to yourselves;" which is no doubt the meaning, as the word soul, {נפש}, is often used for one's self. --- Ed.

bear thy yoke, that thy holy word may gain among us that reverence which it deserves: and may we so submit ourselves to thee, while thou speakest to us by men, that we may at length enjoy a view of thy glory, in which will consist our perfect felicity; and that we may not only contemplate thy glory face to face, but also hear thee thyself speaking, and so speaking, that we shall delight in that sweetness, which is laid up for us in hope, through Christ, our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Sixty-Ninth

Jeremiah 17:22

22. Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.

22. Et ne efferatis onus e domibus vestris die Sabbathi, et omne opus ne faciatis (nullum opus faciatis,) et sanctificetis diem Sabbathi, quemadmodum praecepi patribus vestris.

We stated in our last lecture why the Prophet so severely reproved the Jews for neglecting an external rite. It seems indeed a thing in itself of small moment to rest on one day; and God by Isaiah clearly declares, (Isaiah 1:13,) that he cares not for that external worship, for hypocrites think they have done all their duty when they rest on the seventh day; but God denies that he approved of such a service, it being like a childish play. We know what Paul says, that the exercises of the body do not profit much. (1 Timothy 4:8.) This was not written when Jeremiah spoke, but it must have been written in the hearts of the godly. It might then, at the first view, appear a strange thing, that the Prophet insisted so much or a thing of no great moment: but the reason I have briefly explained, and that was, --- because the gross impiety of the people was thereby plainly detected, for they despised God in a matter that could easily be done. Men often excuse themselves on the ground of difficulty, --- ``I could wish to do it, but it is too onerous for me.'' They could not have alleged this as to the sanctification of the Sabbath; for what can be easier than to rest for one day? Now, when they carried their burdens and did their work on the Sabbath as on other common days, it was, as it were, designedly to shake off the yoke, and to shew openly that they wholly disregarded the authority of the law.

Another reason must also be noticed, which I have not yet, stated: God did not regard the external rite only, but rather the end, of which he speaks in Exodus 31:13, and in Ezekiel 20:12. In both places he reminds us of the reason why he commanded the Jews to keep holy the seventh day, and that was, that it might be to them a symbol of sanctification.

``I have given my Sabbaths,'' he says, ``to you, that ye might know that I am your God who sanctifies you.''

If then we consider the end designed by the Sabbath-day, we cannot say that it was an unimportant rite: for what could have been of more importance to that ancient people than to acknowledge that they had been separated by God from other nations, to be a holy and a peculiar people to him, nay, to be his inheritance?

And it appears from other places that this command was typical. We learn especially from Paul that the Sabbath-day was enjoined in order that the people might look to Christ; for well known is the passage in Colossians 2:16, where he says that

the Sabbath as well as other rites were types of Christ to come, and that he was the substance of them. And the Apostle also, in the Epistle to the Hebrews 4:9, shews that we are to understand spiritually what God had formerly commanded respecting the seventh day, that is, that men should rest from their works, as God rested from his works after he had finished the creation of the world: and Isaiah, in Isaiah 58, teaches us with sufficient clearness what the design of the Sabbath is, even that the people should cease from their own pleasure; for it was to be a day of rest, in which they were truly to worship God, and to leave off pursuing any of the lusts of their own flesh. And God did not simply forbid them to do some things; but he says,

``Thou shalt rest from all thy work.''
(Exodus 20:10; Deuteronomy 5:14)

To come to the Temple, to offer sacrifices, and to circumcise infants, were indeed works; but we cannot say that it was a human work to circumcise infants, for they obeyed God's command in thus presenting to him their offspring; and it was the same when they came to sing God's praises and to offer sacrifices.

We now then perceive that the design as to the ancient people was, that they might know that they were to rest from all the works of the flesh; and God, that he might more easily bend them to obedience, set before them his own example; for there is nothing more to be desired than a mutual agreement between us and God. For this reason God says,

``I rested the seventh day from all my works: therefore, rest ye also now from your works.'' (Exodus 20:11)

God had no doubt chosen the seventh day, that men might devote themselves wholly to the consideration of his works. However this may be, we see that the principal thing on the seventh day was the worship of God. And even heathen writers, whenever they speak of the Sabbath, mention it as the difference between the Jews and the rest of the world. It was, in short, a general profession of God's worship, when they rested on the seventh day. When they now regarded it as nothing, by carrying their burdens and violating their sacred rest, it was doubtless nothing less than wantonly to cast away the yoke of God, as though they openly boasted that they despised whatever he had commanded. There was then in the violation of the Sabbath a public defection from the law. As then the Jews had become apostates, Jeremiah with severity justly condemns them; and hence he says that their extreme impiety was sufficiently proved, because they thus disregarded the seventh day.

He says further, Carry not a burden from your houses. Under one thing he includes every worldly business, by which they violated the Sabbath, though he afterwards adds also what is general, And do no work, but sanctify the Sabbath, as I commanded your fathers. To sanctify the Sabbath-day is to make it different from the other days; for sanctification is the same as separation: they ought not then to have done their own concerns on that day as on other days; for it was a day consecrated to God. He then adds, that it was a day which he commanded their fathers to keep holy. He doubtless claims here authority for the law on the ground of time; as though he had said, that he did not introduce the law on that day or on the day before, but that from the time he gathered the people for himself, the precept concerning the observance

of the Sabbath had been given, as it was evident; for God at the beginning thus spoke by Moses,

``Remember the seventh day,'' etc. (Exodus 20:8.)

As then the whole law of God and the whole of religion fell to the ground through the violation of the Sabbath, the Prophet rightly reminded them here that this day was commanded to be observed by their fathers. We may add further, that they were not ignorant of the memorable punishment by which God had sanctioned the observance of the Sabbath, when by his command he who gathered wood on that day was stoned to death. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 17:23

23. But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction.

23. Et non audierunt, et non inclinarunt aurem suam, et obduraverunt cervicem suam non audiendo et non recipiendo disciplinam.

Here the Prophet exaggerates their crime, --- that the Jews had not now begun for the first time to violate this precept of the Law; for he reminds them that the Sabbath had been before violated by their fathers. We have said elsewhere that men are less excusable when the children follow the bad examples of their fathers. This is indeed what the world does not commonly think; for we see at this day, that most men boast of the examples of their fathers, when they wish to reject both the Law and the Prophets and the gospel: they think themselves to be defended by a strong shield, when they can object to us and say that the fathers had done otherwise. But we have seen from many passages how frivolous is such a defense; and Jeremiah here confirms the same thing, by saying that the crime of the people was the more atrocious, because their fathers had many ages before begun to despise this command of God.

But they heard not, [445] he says, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck. By these words he shews most clearly that their fathers had not sinned through inadvertence or ignorance, but because they had hardened themselves in the contempt of God. It often happens that men, rightly taught, go astray through ignorance, as their want of knowledge may prevent them to understand what they hear: but when men incline not their ear, but harden their neck, their obstinacy becomes manifest, for they knowingly and wilfully reject God. Such perverseness then does Jeremiah here set forth by the various expressions he employs, as we have seen done in other places.

As to the hardening of the neck, it is a metaphor, as stated elsewhere, taken from untameable oxen. God compares his law to a yoke, and for the best reason; for as the oxen are tamed that they may labor and are trained to obey when the yoke is laid on them; so also God proves our obedience, when he rules us by his law, for we otherwise wander after our lusts. As therefore God corrects and checks in us by his

[445] Our version, "they obeyed not," is the Targum. The Septuagint and the Vulgate have the same rendering with that of Calvin. The verb is {{שמע which is to hear, to hearken, to listen. The charge of not hearing God's word, was often brought by the prophets against the Jews. They would not hear or attend to what was said to them, not that they did not obey it. This is the case still with all who are perverted by superstition and tradition; they will not hear the word of God, and its authority is wholly disregarded. Anything about tradition and the Church will be attended to; but God's word is neglected; they will not hear it. --- Ed

law, all the unruly passions of the flesh, he is said to lay his yoke on us. Now, if we are intractable and do not submit to the authority of God, we are said to harden our neck. Jeremiah speaks afterwards without a metaphor, and says, That they heard not, nor received instruction, or correction. [446] The word {מוסר} musar, means teaching or correction. The import of the whole is, that the Jews were not only unteachable when the will of God was plainly made known to them, but that they were also refractory and perverse in their spirit: for when to teaching were added exhortations the more to stimulate them, and when to these were added threatenings, yet God could not by any means subdue their wantonness. It now follows--

Jeremiah 17:24-25

24. And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the LORD, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein;

24. Et erit, si audiendo audieritis me, dicit Jehova, ne efferatis onus per portas urbis hujus die Sabbathi, et ad sanctificandum diem (hoc est, si sanctificatis diem,) non agendo in eo quicquam operis;

25. Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever.

25. Tunc (copula enim hic accipitur pro adverbio temporis) ingredientur per portas urbis hujus Reges et principes, sedentes super solium Davidis, vecti curru et equis, ipsi et proceres eorum, vir Jehudah, et incolae Jerusalem, et habitabitur urbs haec in perpetuum.

Jeremiah introduced, as I have said, a condemnation as to the fathers, that he might make the Jews of his age ashamed of themselves, lest they shouhl imitate the example of those whom they saw to have been disobedient to God. He yet shews, that God would be reconciled to them, provided they from the heart repented; as though he had said, --- ``Your fathers indeed provoked, for many years, and even for ages, the vengeance of God; but as he is ever inclined to mercy, he is ready to forgive you, if only you cease to follow your fathers and return to him.'' In short, he promises them pardon for the time past, if they turned to God.

If by hearing ye will hear, he says, so as to carry no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath-day, and to sanctify (this is connected with ``hear'') the sabbath-day, so that ye do no work on it; then shall enter through the gates of this city kings and princes, etc. He first promises them a perpetuity as to the kingdom; and it was the chief happiness of the people to have a king from the posterity of David; for thus they saw as it were with their eyes the favor of God present, with them, inasmuch as David and his posterity were visible pledges of God's favor. And we must remember also, that that kingdom was a type of a better kingdom, which had not yet been plainly discovered. Hence in the posterity of David the Jews beheld Christ, until he was manifested. For this reason I said, that they were miserable without a king, and that the perpetuity of the kingdom was a main part, of their

[446] The verse may be thus rendered, — And they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear; But hardened their neck, So as not to hear, and not to receive correction. They were reproved and warned; but they refused to be corrected. — Ed.

happiness. This is the reason why Jeremiah now sets before them, as a singular benefit, the continuance of David's kingdom among them, provided they observed the sabbath-day: and thus God did not only strictly demand what he had a ritht to do, but also allured them by the sweetness of his promise, according to his usual manner. He may indeed in one word command what he pleases; but when he invites us by promises, he has a regard to our infirmity.

But it may be here asked, Was the rest on the seventh day of such a moment, that God should on that account promise to them the perpetuity of the kingdom? The answer has been already given, that is, that the end, which was spiritual, was connected with the outward rite; for God commanded the people to keep holy this day, that they might have a manifest symbol:, as it has been said, of their own sanctification. When therefore the Prophet thus speaks, If ye carry no burden through the gates of this city, that is, If ye observe the sabbath-day, the perpetuity of the kingdom shall be secured to you, --- when he thus speaks, he had doubtless, as I have said, a regard to a true observance of the day, which consists not in the naked rite, but included something greater and more excellent, even that they might learn by self-denial to render themselves up to God to be ruled by him; for God will not work in us, unless we first renounce our own reason and the thoughts and feelings of our flesh. In the observance of the Sabbath, therefore, is briefly included the whole of religion: hence he says, Enter in shall kings and princes, sitting on the throne of David.

Noticed also ought to be the state of things at that time: It was a time when the country was nearly in ruins and the kingdom greatly weakened, so that the kings and the whole people were daily exposed to danger. When therefore there were hardly any means to defend the city and to support the kingdom, Jeremiah promised it, as a special favor from God, that the kings and the Princes would be rendered secure. From the family of David, as it is well known, were descended the royal counsellors; and hence he says of the counsellors as well as of the king, that they would sit on the throne of David: and he further says, They shall ride in a chariot and on horses, they the kings and their princes; and he adds, the men of Judah, etc. He extends the promise to the whole body of the people; after having spoken of the chief men, he then adds, that the whole community would be partakers of this blessing and favor of God; for the kingdom was formed, that the whole people might know that they were under God's care and protection. It was not then without reason that Jeremiah states here that this blessing would be conferred in common on the whole people.

And inhabited, he says, shall be the city perpetually. For the same reason he also adds this; for Jerusalem was then in great danger; nay, there were new terrors daily, and there was a horrible desolation in every part, for the whole country had been visited with many calamities. Jeremiah therefore promised now what in a manner seemed incredible, that is, that the city would be made safe, if they truly and faithfully worshipped God, and testified that by observing the Sabbath. The meaning is, that it would be their own fault, if they found not the aid of God sufficient for them, that even if they were besieged by enemies, yet God would be a sure protector of their safety, provided they became his true and faithful servants. He afterwards

adds ---

Jeremiah 17:26

26. And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt offerings, and sacrifices, and meat offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the LORD.

26. Et venient ex urbibus Jehudah, et ex circuitibus (hoc est, ex toto circuitu) Jerusalem, et ex terra Benjamin, et ex planitie, et ex monte (hoc est, ex montibus, vel, regionibus montanis,) et a meridie, afferentes holocaustum, sacrificium, et oblationem {מנחה} et thus, et afferentes confessionem (vel, laudem,) in domum Jehovae.

Here he mentions the second part of the blessing; for the whole people would be preserved safe in the possession of their kingdom and priesthood, as in both the favor of God appeared; for both the king and the priest were types of Christ. For as by the priesthood they knew that God was propitious to them, they being reconciled to him by sacrifices, and as by the kingdom they knew that God was the protector and guardian of their safety, so these two things constituted a real and complete happiness. Hence the Prophet, having mentioned one of these things, now proceeds to the other, ---

They shall come from the cities of Judah ad from the whole circuit of Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from other places, to offer sacrifices in the Temple. Sacrifices of themselves could not indeed serve the people; but Jeremiah assumed this principle, --- that reconciliation was not in vain promised to the people by the sacrifices; for sins were really atoned, and Godas it were came forth to gather a people for himself. It was the same as though God said, that he would by all means be gracious to them, if only they observed the Sabbath, that is, if they with a pure heart devoted themselves to his service. The country, as I have said, was in a great measure laid waste; but the Prophet, after having spoken of the city, now adds, that all Judea would become inhabited, for from thence they would ascend to the Temple to offer sacrifices. After having mentioned the whole circuit, he names the land of Benjamin, the half tribe of whom, as it is well known, had continued in the faith, and had not separated from the family of David; indeed a part of the city was in the tribe of Benjamin.

He afterwards adds, the plain and the mountains, as though he had said, God's worshippers would come from all the neighboring region to celebrate the feasts and to offer sacrifices as usual.

At last he mentions burnt-offering, sacrifice, and oblation, {מנחה}, meneche; the three principal offerings. But Jeremiah wished to shew briefiy that God would cause religion to flourish and prevail among them as before. But after having spoken of the external worship, he then refers to the end, They shall bring, he says, confession, or praise, {תודה}, tude, into the Temple. [447] Here by one word Jeremiah includes the

[447] It is more consistent with the rest of the passage to regard this word as meaning "sacrifice of praise," or thanksgiving, or confession. There were sacrifices of this kind especially prescribed; see Leviticus 7:12-15, and the word is often taken in this sense, without the word "sacrifice" being connected with it. Offerings according to the Law are the things which are here mentioned: and the same verb "bring," precedes {{תודה as in the previous instances, when ``burnt-offering, sacrifice,'' etc., are named. The Septuagint, as in many other instances, give only a verbal translation, ``praise;'' ``oblation,'' is the Vulgate;

chief thing in sacrifices, as we may learn from Psalm 50:14, 23; where it is said,

``sacrifice praise unto God.''

God there rejects the sacrifices which were offered by the Jews without a right motive: he then shews what he required, commanding them to sacrifice praise. So now Jeremiah teaches us that the design of all sacrifices was to celebrate the name of God, that is, that the Jews might profess that they owed all things to him, that they received their life and their safcty freely from him. in short, they were thereby to testify their gratitude before God. So at this day this truth remains the same, though the types have been abolished: we do not offer calves or oxen or rams, but the sacrifice of praise, by confessing and proclaiming his benefits and blessings, according to what the Apostle says in Hebrews 13:15. But what ought to prevail among us apart from types, was formerly accompanied with types; and yet this truth was observed by the Jews in common with us, --- that while they offered their sacrifices under the Law, they were to testify their gratitude by visible symbols. Let us proceed ---

Jeremiah 17:27

27. But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

27. Quod si non audietis me ad sanctificandum diem sabbathi, et non tollendo onus, et ingrediendo per portas Jerusalem die sabbathi; tunc accendam ignem in portis ejus, et vorabit palatia Jerusalem, et non extinguetur.

Now, on the other hand, the Prophet terrifies them, if they hearkened not to the promises of God. God first kindly allures us; but when he sees us to be refractory, he deals with us according to the hardness of our hearts. He therefore now adds threatenings to promises. He had said, that the Jews would be happy, if they worshipped and served God faithfully; for their priesthood and their kingdom would be continued to them.

But he now adds, If ye will not obey, so as to sanctify the sabbath-day, and not to carry a burden on it, and not to enter through the gates of Jerusalem, that is, for the purpose of doing business (for it was lawful for them, as it is well known, to go out of the city, but by entering he means the transaction of business) --- If then ye will not hearken to me in this respect, then, he says, I will kindle a fire in the gates of this city. We see the design of the Prophet, --- that he would have the Jews to entertain a sure hope of their safety, provided they repented, and provided the pure and uncorrupted worship of God prevailed among them; but that, on the other hand, he wished to fill them with terror, if they went on in their obstinacy.

No doubt this commination greatly offended them; for we know how self-confident they were, and how foolishly they boasted that the city, in which God had his habitation, could not be demolished; and yet the Prophet declares here that the destruction of the holy city was nigh at hand, if they violated the sabbath-day as they had been accustomed to do. But that this punishment might not seem to be too severe, he

``thanksgiving,'' the Syriac; and ``sacrifice of confession,'' the Targum. All the words are singular in Hebrew --- burnt-offering --- sacrifice --- oblation, (or meat-offering) --- incense --- thanksgiving. It would be well to retain the singular in a version. --- Ed.

shews that the people were inexcusable, if they rejected these plain warnings: he says, If ye will not hearken to me; for they might have otherwise objected and said, that they had been deceived, as they did not think that there was so great a sin in violating the Sabbath. Jeremiah now excludes all such evasions, for he says in effect, ``Behold I am present with you by God's authority; if ye will violate the Sabbath as hitherto, what excuse can you make? Have you not been proved guilty of open impiety? for God has spoken; and how is it that ye reject his teaching?'' We thus see that this, If ye will not hearken to me so as to sanctify the Sabbath, was said to anticipate an objection.

He then adds, Devour shall the fire the gates of the city, and shall not be extinguished, that is, shall not be extinguished until it shall consume the whole city and its gates. We indeed know that assemblies were then held at the gates, and that they were therefore places of great importance. As to the fire it is to be taken metaphorically for destruction; and yet we know that even fire was kindled by the Chaldeans; for they deemed it not enough to demolish the city, but proceeded still farther: hence the Temple was burnt, and the houses were consumed by fire. We ought however to explain the word of the Prophet as meaning simply this --- that God's vengeance would be like fire, destroying and consuming all things, so that not even the gates would remain. Something usually remains when cities are demolished to the foundations; but God threatens the Jews with something more grievous --- that the city would not be in a common way destroyed, but be so wholly consumed that nothing would remain. We shall proceed to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou dost not now prescribe to us one day on which we are to testify that we are sanctified by thee, but commandest us to observe a sacred rest through our whole life, so as to renounce ourselves and the world, --- O grant, that we may really contemplate this rest, and so crucify the old man, that being effectually united to thine only-begotten Son, we may become also partakers of that resurrection in which he has led the way, and be gathered into that celestial kingdom which he has procured for us by his death and resurrection, after having so fought in this world, under thy banner, that thou mayest ever reign in us and rule and govern us by thy Spirit, so that nothing throughout life may be our own doing, but that we suffer ourselves to be governed by thee, until thou at length become to us all in all. --- Amen.

Chapter 18

CHAPTER 18

Lecture Seventieth

Jeremiah 18:1-6

1. The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

1. Sermo qui fait ad Jeremiam a Jehova, dicendo,

2. Arise, and go down to the potter's house; and there I will cause thee to hear my words.

2. Surge, et descende in domum figuli, et faciam audire [448] te verba mea.

3. Then I went down to the potter's house, and behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.

3. Et descendi in domum figuli, et ecce ipse faciens opus super lapide (super typo; alii vertunt, super rotam:)

4. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it

4. Et corruptum fuit vas, quod ipse faciebat ex luto (lutum, ad verbum) in manu figuli; et reversus est, et fecit vas aliud sicut rectum fuit in oculis figuli ut faceret:

5. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

5. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad me, dicendo,

6 O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

6. Annon sicut figulus hic potero vobis facere, domus Israel? dicit Jehova: ecce sicut lutum in manu figuli, ita vos in manu mea, domus Israel.

The sum of what is here taught is, that as the Jews gloried in God's singular favor, which yet had been conferred on them for a different purpose, even that they might be his sacred heritage, it was necessary to take from them a confidence of this kind;

[448] Both the Septuagint and the Vulgate improperly render the verb "thou shalt hear;" but the Targum retains the causative sense, "I will cause thee to hear." — Ed.

for they at the same time heedlessly despised God and the whole of his law. We indeed know that in God's covenant there was a mutual stipulation --- that the race of Abraham were faithfully to serve God, as God was prepared to perform whatever he had promised; for it was the perpetual law of the covenant,

``Walk before me and be perfect,''

which was once for all imposed on Abraham, and extended to all his posterity. (Genesis 17:1.) As then the Jews thought that God was by an inviolable compact bound to them, while they yet proudly rejected all his prophets, and polluted, and even as far as they could, abolished, his true favorship, it was necessary to deprive them of that foolish boasting by which they deluded themselves. Hence the Prophet was commanded to go down to the potter's house, that he might relate to the people what he saw there, even that the potter, according to his own will and pleasure, made and re-made vessels.

It seems indeed at the first view a homely mode of speaking; but if we examine ourselves we shall all find, that pride, which is innate in us, cannot be corrected except the Lord draws us as it were by force to see clearly what it is, and except he shews us plainly what we are. The Prophet might have attended to God speaking to him at his own house, but he was commanded to go down to the house of the potter --- not indeed for his own sake, for he was willing to be taught --- but that he might teach the people, by adding this sign as a confirmation to his doctrine.

He then relates what had been enjoined him, that he descended into the potter's house; and then he relates what he saw there --- that when the potter formed a vessel it was marred, and that he then made another vessel from the same clay, and, as it seems, one of a different form; for there is a peculiar emphasis in these words, as it seemed right in his eyes. The application is afterwards added --- cannot I, as the potter, change you, O house of Israel? Doubtless, ye are in my hand as the clay in the hand of the potter; that is, I have no less power over you than the potter over his work and his earthen vessels. [449]

We now see what this doctrine contains --- that men are very foolish when they are proud of their present prosperous condition, and think that they are as it were fixed in a state of safety; for in a single moment God can cast down those whom he has raised up, and also raise up on high those whom he has before brought down to the ground. This is even well known by heathens, for moderation is commended by them, which they describe thus --- ``That no one ought to be inflated in prosperity, nor succumb in adversity.'' But no one is really influenced by this thought, except he who acknowledges that we are ruled by the hand of God: for they who dream that fortune rules in the world set up their own wisdom, their own wealth, and their own strongholds. It must then necessarily be, that they always delude themselves with some vain hope or another. Until then men are brought to know that they are

[449] The proper rendering of the former part of this verse, according to Gataker and Venema, is as follows, — "And marred was the vessel which he made, at the clay was in the hand of the potter." Though there be readings, and many, which have {{ב instead of {כ} before ``clay,'' yet the received text is the most suitable. The word ``clay'' is omitted in the Septuagint. The meaning is, that the vessel was marred, while it was yet as a soft clay in the hand of the potter, after he had formed it on the stones. As to ``potter,'' the noun here is used instead of the pronoun, ``in his hand,'' which is often the case in Hebrew. The pronoun ``his'' is what is given by the Septuagint and the Vulgate. --- Ed

so subject to God's power that their condition can in a single moment be changed, according to his will, they will never be humble as they ought to be. This doctrine therefore was entitled to special notice, especially when we consider how foolishly the Jews had abused the privilege with which God had favored Abraham and all his posterity; it was therefore an admonition altogether necessary. Besides, if we come to ourselves, we shall find that it requires a great effort to learn to humble ourselves, as Peter reminds us, under the mighty hand of God. (1 Peter 5:6.)

With regard to the words we must observe that {האבנים} eabenim, is a word in the dual number. The Prophet no doubt meant the moulds, des moules; for they who render it ``wheel'' seem not to understand the subject. [450] The Prophet evidently refers to the moulds, made either of stone, or of wood, or of white clay; and this the number sufficiently proves. He then saw the potter with his moulds, avec ses moules, so that when he had formed one vessel it was marred; then he took the same clay and formed another vessel, and that according to his own will. I have already stated why it was necessary for the Prophet to go down to the potter's house: he did so that he might afterwards lead the Jews to see their own case in a more vivid manner; for we know what a powerful effect a representation of this kind produces, when a scene like this is set before our eyes. Naked doctrine would have been frigid to slothful and careless men; but when a symbol was added, it had much greater effect. This then was the reason why God ordered the Prophet to see what the potter was doing.

Now, in the application, we must notice how things correspond: As the clay is at the will and under the power of the potter, so men are at the will of God: God then is compared to the potter. There is indeed no comparison between things which are equal, but the Prophet argues from the less to the greater. Then God, with respect to men, is said to be the potter, for we are the clay before him. We must also notice the variety in what was formed: from the same clay one vessel is made, then another different from the first. These three things that are compared ought to be specially observed. It is then said, cannot I, as the potter, do with you, O house of Israel? God includes here two of these comparisons, he compares himself to the potter, and he compares the people to clay. We know that God has much greater power over men than a mortal man over the clay; for however he may form it into vessels he is yet not the creator of the clay. Then much greater authority has God over men than the potter over the clay. But the comparison, as I have said, is of the greater with the less, as though he had said, ``The potter can form the clay at his will; am I inferior to him? or, is not my power at least, equal to the power of the artificer, who is a mortal and of an abject condition?'' Then he adds, with you, or to you, O house of Israel? as though he had said, ``Trust ye in your own excellency as you please, yet ye are not better than the clay, when ye consider what I am and what I can do to you.''

We have now seen two of the comparisons; the third follows--that God can turn

[450] "On the stones," is the Septuagint; "on the wheel," the Vulgate and the Targum; "on the anvil," the Syriac. "There can be no doubt," says Blayney, "that the machine is intended on which the potters formed their earthen vessels; and the appellation {οἱ} {λίθοι}, `the stones,' will appear very proper if we consider this machine as consisting of a pair of circular stones, placed upon one another like millstones, of which the lower was immovable, but the upper one turned upon the foot of a spindle or axis, and had motion communicated to it by the feet of the potter sitting at his work, as may be learned from Ecclesiastes 38:29 [sic]. Upon the top of this upper stone, which was flat, the clay was placed, which the potter, having given the stone the due velocity, formed into shape with his hands.''

us here and there, and change us at his will. Then how foolishly do men trust in their present good fortune; for in a single moment their condition can be altered, as there is nothing certain on the earth.

But we must bear in mind what I have already stated --- that vain was the confidence by which the Jews deluded themselves; for they thought that God was bound to them, and so they promised themselves a state of perpetuity, and, as though they could with impunity despise the whole law, they ever boasted that the covenant, by which God had adopted the seed of Abraham, was hereditary. Now the Prophet shews that the covenant was in such a way hereditary, that yet the Jews ought to have regarded it as it were an adventitious benefit, as though he had said, ``What God gave you he can take away at any time; there is then nothing certain to you, except so far as God will be propitious to you.'' In short, he reminds them that the whole of their safety depended on God's gratuitous layout, as though he had said, ``Ye have nothing as your own, but what God has conferred on you is at his will and pleasure; he can to-day take away even what he had yesterday given you. What meaneth then this foolish boasting, when ye say that ye are exempted from the common lot of men?''

The Jews might indeed have rightly disregarded all the dangers of the world, for God had gathered them under his own protection; they would indeed have been safe under his guardianship, had they observed mutual faithfulness, so as to be really his people as he had promised to be their God; but as they esteemed as nothing his whole law, and made void the covenant in which they foolishly gloried, the Prophet, as we see, did not without reason shake off that confidence by which they deceived themselves.

We may hence gather a useful doctrine: With regard to the whole race of man there is nothing certain or permanent in this life; for God can change our condition at any time, so as to cast down the rich and the eminent from their elevation, and also to raise up the most despised of men, according to what is said in Psalm 113:7. And we know this to be true, not only as to individuals, but also as to nations and kingdoms. Many kings have so increased their power as to think themselves beyond the reach of harm; and yet we have seen that God laid them prostrate as by a sudden whirlwind: so also it has happened to powerful nations. With regard then to the condition of mankind, God shews here as in a mirror, or by a vivid spectacle, that sudden changes are often in the world: which ought to awaken us from our torpor, so that no one of us may dare to promise himself another day, or even another hour, or another moment. This is one thing; but this doctrine has a peculiar application to us; for as God has by a peculiar favor separated us from the rest of the world, so he would have us to depend wholly on his mere good will. Faith indeed ought to be tranquil, nay, it ought to disregard whatever may bring on us any terror or anxiety; but faith, where has it its seat? In heaven. Then courage is required in all the children of God, so that they may with a quiet mind disregard all the changes of the world. But we must see that the tranquillity of faith be well founded, that is, in humility. For as we cast our anchor in heaven, so also, with regard to ourselves, we ought always to he low and be humble. Whosoever then flies in vain confidence boasts in

vain of faith, and falsely pretends that he trusts in God. Let it then ever come to our minds, and constantly recur to us, that our condition is not through ourselves safe and secure, but through the gratuitous goodness of God. We now see the application of this doctrine. The Prophet proceeds, ---

Jeremiah 18:7-10

7 At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it;

7. Subito loquar contra gentem et contra regnum, ad evellendum et eradicandum (alii vertunt, ad frangendum, vel, conterendum) et ad perdendum.

8. If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

8. Et conversa fuit gens illa a malo suo (hoc est, a malitia sua,) de qua (vel, pro qua) locutus sum adversus illam; et (potius, tunc; copula valet hic adverbium temporis) poenitebit me super malo, quod cogitaveram ut facerem ei.

9. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build, and to plant it;

9. Et repente loquar super gentem et super regnum, ad aedificandum et ad plantandum;

10. If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

10. Quod si fecerit malum coram oculis meis, ut non audiat vocem meam, tunc poenitebit me super bono, quod locutus fueram ut benefacerem ei.

This is a fuller application of the Prophet's doctrine; for he had said generally before, that the people were in God's hand as the clay is in the hand of the potter; but he adds here what is more popular or comprehensive, --- that all men are in the hand of God, so that he now favors one nation with his blessing, and then deprives them of it, and that he raises up those whom he had previously brought low.

I have said that this part of the doctrine is more popular or comprehensive, for he refers to repentance. When Paul adduced this similitude, --- that we are in the power of God as the clay is in the hand of the potter, he spoke not in so popular a manner: for he did not speak of repentance, but ascended higher and said, that before the world was created, it was in God's power to determine what he pleased respecting every individual, and that we are now formed according to his will, so that he chooses one and rejects the other. Paul then did not refer to faithfulness nor to repentance, but spoke of the hidden purpose of God, by which he has predestinated some to salvation and some to destruction. (Romans 9:21.) Isaiah also seems to have had the same thing in view; for he says only,

``Woe to them who rise up against their Maker.''
(Isaiah 45:9.)

Cannot I determine, saith God, with regard to men, as the potter, who forms the clay as he pleases? We must then maintain this principle, --- that men are thus formed according to God's will, so that all must become mute;. for uselessly do the reprobate make a clamor, object and say, ``Why hast thou formed us thus?'' Has not the potter, says Paul, power, etc.? This is what must be said of God's hidden

predestination.

But Jeremiah here accommodates his doctrine to the people, that he might shew, that God had by a gratuitous covenant cliosen and adopted the seed of Abraham in such a way, that he could still repudiate the unworthy, even all those who despised so great a favor.

We now see the various applications of this doctrine; God determined, before the creation of the world, what he pleased respecting each individual; but his counsel is hid, and to us incomprehensible. There is here a more familiar application made, --- that, God at one time takes away his blessings, and that at another he raises men as it were from death, that he might set them on high, according as he pities those who truly and from the heart turn to him, or is offended with the ingratitude of such as reject his offered favors.

Hence he says, Suddenly will I speak against a nation and against a kingdom, to pull down, to root up, or to extirpate, and to destroy. By saying suddenly, he reminds the Jews of their origin; for what was their condition when the Lord stretched out his hand to them, and brought them from that wretched bondage in which they lived? as though he had said, ``Consider from whence God raised you, and then acknowledge that he raised you in a wonderful manner and beyond human expectation; for in the same day ye were of all the most miserable, and of all the most happy; one night not only brought you from death into life, but carried you from the deepest abyss above all earthly happiness, as though ye rode on the clouds.'' God then suddenly spoke. [451]

But he refers also to punishment; God speaks of a nation and of a kingdom, to do it good; and he speaks again, in order to pull down, to destroy a nation and a kingdom. How then comes it, that they who seem for a time to flourish and to be most happy, suddenly perish? Because God punishes men for their ingratitude. And how comes it, that they, who were trodden under foot by all, suddenly rise? Because the Lord pities them.

But the Prophet speaks first of punishment; Suddenly, he says, will I speak of a nation and of a kingdom, to pull down, to extirpate and to destroy; that is, even they who seem far from all danger shall find that they are exposed to my judgment. But if a nation, he says, turns from its wickedness, against whom I have spoken, then I will repent of the evil, etc. The Prophet no doubt intended to shut up the mouths of the Jews, who, as we have before seen, continually contended with God; for he could not convince them that the punishments were just which God inflicted on them for their sins. As then they were thus perverse in their wickedness, and hypocrisy also had hardened them the more, the Prophet says here in God's name, ``When I speak against a nation and threaten final ruin, if it repents, I shall be immediately reconciled

[451] "At length," or finally — {πέρας}, is the Septuagint; ``suddenly,'' theVulgate; but the Targum renders the word here, ``At one time,'' and in ver. 9, ``At another time;'' and this seems to be the meaning of ,{רגע} when repeated, as it is here. Let it be so rendered, and let the future verb which comes after it be viewed as present, which is often the case in Hebrew, and the whole passage may be literally rendered, without giving an unusual meaning to the copulative, ,{ו} --- 7. At one time I speak of a nation and of a kingdom, In order to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy 8. And that nation returns from its evil, Against which I had spoken, And I repent of the evil Which I had thought of doing to it: 9. And at another time I speak of a nation and of a kingdom, In order to build and to plant; And it doeth evil in mine eyes, So as not to hear my voice; And I repent of the good Which I had spoken of doing to it, or of making good to it. The whole is a striking narrative of God's dealings with nations and kingdoms. --- Ed.

to it; there is therefore no ground for the Jews to expostulate with me, as though I dealt with them too severely; for they shall find me reconcilable if they repent from the heart.'' It follows then, that their obstinacy was the cause why God proceeded in his judgments, for the repentance of God means no other thing than what Scripture says elsewhere, that he is merciful, slow to wrath, and ready to forgive. (Numbers 14:18; Psalm 103:8.) He then here testifies, that nothing hindered the Jews from being in a better state but their own perverseness.

On the other hand, he affirms, that the lost are restored, when the Lord speaks suddenly, of a nation and of a kingdom, to build and to plant; as though it was said, --- ``I will not only forgive, but I am ready to bestow blessings on those whom I had previously rejected as mine enemies.'' Then God amplifies his goodness when he says, that he will not only forgive the sins of men, so as freely to pardon them, but that he is ready to bestow on them all kinds of blessings, if they seek to be reconciled to him.

Now follows the opposite clause, But if it will do evil before mine eyes, so as not to hear my voice; that is, when a nation has been planted through my kindness, (for this is required by the context,) then I will repent, etc. By this denunciation is meant, that God would tread in the dust those whom he had favored with singular benefits, on account of the abuse made of them; although he had said, ``When I promise bountifully and freely to a nation or a kingdom everything that can be wished, except my favor and goodness be rightly received, then I repent of the good done to it.'' The meaning is, that the way of pardon is always open, when a sinner turns to God, and that it is in vain for men to boast of God's promises, except, they in fear and obedience submit themselves to him.

Both these things were necessary; that is, that the Jews should know that God would be entreated if they repented, and that his promises could not be extended to those who were guilty of such gross abuse as a total disregard of his law and his prophets. Then the Prophet mentions here the ordinary course, --- that as soon as men repented, they might safely and fully expect good things from God, for he is inclined to mercy; and then, that no nation, however it may excel in gifts, ought to indulge a foolish confidence and to use its present glory as means to despise its giver, for God can take away what he has given. The real import of the whole then is, that we cannot expect to enjoy the benefits which God bestows on us, except we persevere in faithfulness and in the fear of him. It is indeed cmtain that God's blessings do not depend on worthiness in man; but still he will not have his bounty to be despised, as was the case with the Jews, and at this day it is a common thing in the world. It now follows,--

Jeremiah 18:11-12

11. Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.

11. Et nunc (agedum) dic ad virum Jehudah (hoc est, ad unumquemque,) et incolas Jerusalem, dicendo (alloquere omnes Judaeos et incolas Jerusalem,)sic dicit

Jehova, Ecce ego fingo super vos malum, et cogito super vos eogitationem; revertimini igitur quisque a via sua mala, et rectas facite vias vestras et studia vestra.

12. And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.

12. Et dixerunt, Actum est; quia post cogitationes nostras ambulabimus, et quisque pravitatem cordis sui mali faciemus.

The Prophet is now bidden to turn his discourse to the Jews, that he might apply the doctrine of repentance, to which he had referred; for a doctrine generally stated, as it is well known, is less efflcient. He then contends here, as it were, in full force with his own nation: Say then to the Jews and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who indeed ought to have shewn the way to others, but were themselves the worst of all, return ye, he says, every one from his evil way. Here God shews, that what he had before stated generally, applied peculiarly to the Jews, --- that he is reconcilable when a sinner returns to him, and that they who disregard and despise his goodness cannot possibly escape unpunished.

Return ye, he says, every one from his evil way, and make right your ways; why so? For behold I frame for you an evil, and I think for you a thought; that is, ``Vengeance is now prepared and is suspended over your heads, except ye turn in due time; but if ye truly and from the heart repent, I am ready to receive you.'' We see how God includes the two things before referred to: He had previously said, ``If I speak against a nation, and it turns from its sins, I immediately repent; but when I promise to be a father to a nation or a kingdom, I do not allow myself and my bounty to be despised, which men do when they reject what I offer.'' But he now says, Behold, I think, [452] etc.; this refers to the former clause, the threatenings; and then when he adds, Return ye, he promises pardon; for as it has been said elsewhere and often, there can be no exhortation to repentance without a hope of favor, as God cannot be feared, except there be propitiation with him, according to what is said in Psalm 130:4

God then shews in this verse, that he was ready to receive the Jews if they repented; but that if they continued perverse as they were wont to be, he would not suffer them to go unpunished, for he thought of evil for them. But this thought included the effect, the execution, as he was the potter, in whose hand and power they were.

Then the Prophet adds what shews how hopeless was the impiety of the people, for all his labor was in vain. It was indeed a monstrous stupidity, when they could not be terrified by God's threatenings not allured by his kind promises. But the Prophet meant also to shew, that God tried all means to restore the people from ruin to life and salvation, but that all means were tried in vain, owing to the irreclaimable character of the people. I cannot finish the subject to-day; I must therefore defer it till to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since we stand or fall at thy will, we may be conscious

[452] More is meant by this word than expressed, which is often the case in all languages. “I contrive with respect to you a contrivance.” is perhaps the most literal rendering. “Device” is taken commonly in a bad sense. — Ed.

of our weakness and frailty, and constantly remember that not only our life is a shadow, but that we are wholly nothing, and thus learn to trust in thee alone, and to depend on thee alone and on thy good pleasure; and as it is thine to begin and to complete whatever belongs to our salvation, may we in real fear and trembling submit ourselves to thee, and proceed in the course of our calling, ever calling on thee, and casting all our cares into thy bosom, until being at length freed from all dangers, we shall be gathered into that eternal and blessed rest which has been obtained for us by' the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Seventy-First

The Prophet, having related that he had denounced on the Jews the vengeance of God, adds now, how proudly they despised his threatenings. And their sin was on this account enhanced, because a hope of pardon remained for them, provided they returned to God. But the Prophet says, that they expressly refused to do so. They said, {נואש} nuash, which we render, ``It is all over,'' though interpreters in general render it, ``It is past hope.'' We have spoken of this word in chapter second, and the Prophet now repeats the same thing, --- that the Jews were obstinately given to superstitions, and also to perverted counsels, thinking that they could well provide for their own safety and drive away all dangers by connecting themselves, at one time with the Assyrians, and at another with the Egyptians. But as the verb {יאש} iash, may be taken as signifying, to be weary, as we learn from the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes; it may perhaps be not unsuitably rendered here, ``We are become weary;'' that is, we are unwilling to consume so much labor in vain; for the ungodly took this as a reason for their obstinacy, that they had labored long and much in something or another; and pride hardened them, and they said, ``Have we not hitherto labored in vain?'' Now this meaning, ``We have become wearied,'' Does not appear in-suitable, by which they implied, ``Thou oughtest to have called us back at the beginning; but now we have nearly finished the whole journey and are not far distant from the goal; it cannot then be that we shall return to the starting place, for it would be absurd for us to spend so much labor in vain and to no purpose.'' Nor is this meaning disapproved of by those who regard the word as a noun, ``It is weariness,'' that is, ``It is now too late to reprove us, for we have now followed this way for many years.'' [453]

With regard to the main subject, there is but little difference. But the meaning would be clearer were we thus to paraphrase it, ``Labor more than enough has been already spent; thou comest then not in due time.''

Isaiah in Isaiah 57:10, seems to have reproved the Jews for what was praiseworthy, if this declaration of Jeremiah be right; for he spoke thus,

``For ye have wearied yourselves in your ways,''

and no one has said {נואש}, nuash; and Jeremiah reproves them here for having said {נואש}, nuash. These two places theft seem inconsistent. But when Isaiah spoke thus, he reproved the insensibility of the Jews, for even experience, which is said to be the teacher of fools, had not made them weary; for when they had so often found

[453] The variety of the versions is remarkable as to the word {נואש}; ``We shall be men, or act manly,'' is the Septuagint; ``We have despaired,'' the Vulgate; ``We shall perish,'' the Syriac. It is a participle, and may be rendered ``Hopeless.'' Blayney's version is, ``It is a thing not to be hoped.'' --- Ed

by their own calamities that they had been at one time deceived by the Assyrians, and at another by the Egyptians, it was an instance of palpable madness not to learn at length by long experience, and to confess, ``We have surely labored in vain.'' We thus see in what sense Isaiah blamed them for not saying, ``It is weariness;'' that is, because they did not consider that their labor had been in vain. But our Prophet here has another thing in view, --- that the Jews were unwilling to lose their toil, but went on in their course obstinately, for they had hardened themselves so as to persist in their corrupt habit of sinning.

It follows, For after our thoughts we shall go, and every one will do the wickedness of his evil heart? [454] Doubtless they did not thus speak openly, for they did not avowedly boast that they were ungodly and despisers of God: but the Prophet did not regard what they said, but what their conduct proved, for the Jews were wont to set up their own devices and the fallacies of Satan against the word of God. No wonder then that the Prophet charges them with these impious and sacrilegious words, that they resolved to follow their own thoughts, and the wickedness of their own hearts, rather than to submit to God and to obey his word.

We hence see that hypocrites gain nothing by obtruding their vain mummeries, for God cannot be dealt with sophistically or cunningly. Condemnation then awaits all the ungodly, however they may by disguises cover their wickedness; for whatever is contrary to sound doctrine, is a sinful device, a fallacy of Satan, and, in a word, the impiety of a corrupt heart. Whosoever indeed turns aside from the plain teaching of the prophets, and from the teaching of the law, follow their own thoughts, or the figments of their own hearts. It hence follows that they try evasions in vain, for when they reject pure doctrine they set up their own inventions. In the same sense we are to take the words ``his own evil heart,'' {הרע} {לבו} labu ero; they never confessed that, their heart was evil or wicked, and yet the Prophet charged them with having uttered the words here stated, for he considered, as I have said, what their conduct proved, and not the evasions by which hypocrites usually attempt to deceive God. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 18:13

13. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Ask ye now among the heathen, who hath heard such things: the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing.

13. Propterea sic dicit Jehova, Interrogate agedum inter gentes, quis audierit secundum hoc (quis unquam audierit aliquid simile?) foeditatem (vel, portentum) patravit valde virgo Israel.

God shews here that the Jews were become wholly irreclaimable, for they arrived at the highest pitch of impiety, when they were so daring as to reject the salvation offered to them; for what had the Prophet in view but, to extricate them from ruin? God himself by his Prophet wished to secure their safety. How great then was their ingratitude to reject God's paternal care, and not to give ear to the Prophet who was to be a minister of salvation to them? Now as they were extremely deaf and stupid: God turns to the Gentiles.

[454] More literally, — For after our own contrivances shall we go; And we shall do, each, the resolutions of his evil heart. — Ed.

Enquire, or ask, he says, among the Gentiles, Has any one heard such a thing? as though he had said, ``I will no more contend with those brute animals, for there is no reason in them; but the Gentiles, destitute of the light of knowledge, can be made witnesses of so gross an impiety.'' And he says the same thing in Jeremiah 2:10,

``Go, pass through the isles and survey the whole world, has any nation forsaken its own gods, and yet they are no gods?''

As though he had said, ``Religion so much prevails among wretched idolaters, that they continue steadfast in their superstitions; as they consider it a dreadful thing to change their god, they therefore shun it as a monstrous thing. Hence it is, that they are devoted to their superstitions, for the god whom they have once received, they think it the highest impiety to forsake, while yet they are no gods; but my people have forsaken me, who am the fountain of living water.'' Jeremiah repeats now the same thing in other words, that such an example could not be found among heathens.

He then adds, A base thing has the virgin of Israel done. Some indeed render {שערורת}, shorret, ``a monstrous thing,'' and it may be thus taken metaphorically, for the verb {שער} shor, means to count, to think; and this meaning may be adopted here; but as in many places it signifies baseness, I will not depart from that common meaning. [455] He says then, that it was an extremely base thing for the people to forsake him. He does not call the people the virgin of Israel by way of honor, but to augment their reproach. For God, as we have before seen, had espoused the people to himself; and so it was their duty to observe conjugal fidelity, as a virgin espoused by a husband, who ought not to regard any other, for she is not to look for any other after she has pledged her faith. But the people of Israel, who ought to have been as it were the bride of God, sinned most basely, yea, most disgracefully and infamously, when they prostituted themselves to wicked counsels as well as to superstitions. He now adds comparisons, by whichlte more fully exposes their wickedness, ---

Jeremiah 18:14-15

14. Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken?

14. Ar relinquet e rupe agri nivem Libani? an relinquentur aquae alienae et frigidae fluentes?

15. Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burnt incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up;

15. Quia oblitus est mei populus meus, frustra suffitum faciunt (vel, adolent,) dum corruere eos fecerunt (copula enim explicitive accipitur, vel causaliter) in viis suis (vel, ipsorum,) semitis saeculi, ut ambularent per semitas viam non calcatam (quamquam {כשל} significat etiam impingere, vel, offendere, ideo verti posset, et eos impingere fecerunt in viis suis.)

[455] It is rendered in the Septuagint and Vulgate as a noun in the plural number, and more suitably in this place, — 13. Therefore thus saith Jehovah, Enquire I pray among the nations, Who hath heard such things as these — The horrible things which she hath fully done, The virgin of Israel. The particle {,{מאד much, very much, etc., must from its position be construed with the verb, and not with ``horrible.'' It may be rendered, ``which she hath done excessively.'' --- Ed

As I have just said, God here enhances the sin of the people by a twofold comparison; for when one can draw water in his own field, and find there a spring, what folly will it be for him to run to a distance to seek water? And then, when water does not spring up near, but flows from a distance in a pure and cold stream, who will not be satisfied with such water? and if he seeks to find the spring, will not all laugh at such madness? Now God was like a living fountain, and at Jerusalem was the spring where the Jews might drink to their full; and God's blessings flowed also to them as it were through various channels, so that nothing was wanting to them. We then see that here is condemned a twofold madness in the people, that they despised God's kindness which was near at hand, as though one close to Mount Libanus refused its cold waters, or as though one would not draw water from a river without going to the spring-head. Since then God offered himself to them in every way, and presented his bounty to them, it was a madness extremely base and inexcusable to reject flowing waters and the fountain itself.

We now perceive the meaning of this passage. It is doubtless natural for all to be satisfied with present blessings, especially when nothing better can anywhere else be found. When one has a fountain in his own field, why should he go elsewhere to drink? This would be monstrous. Dost thou want water? God supplies thee with it; take it from thine own fountain. If one objects and says, ``That fountain I dislike; I wish to know whether better waters can be found at a distance.'' This we see is a proof of brutal stupidity; for if the water which flows he cold and pure, and he dislikes it, because he wishes to go to the spring, he shews his own folly, whoever he may be. If, for instance, any one at this day would not drink the waters of the Rhone, which flows by here, and would not taste of the springs, but would run to the fountain and spring-head of the Rhone, would he not deserve to perish through thirst? God then shews that the Jews were so void of all sense and reason, that they ought to have been deemed detestable by all; and therefore in the application, when he says, My people have forgotten me, both clauses ought to be repeated. This indeed by itself would have been obscure, or at least not sufficiently explicit; but God here in substance repeats what he had said before, that he is the fountain of living water which was offered to the Jews; and also that his bounty flowed through various channels like living and cold waters. As then the people forgat God they were doubly ungrateful, for they refused to drink of the fountain itself, and disdained the cold and flowing waters, which were not hot to occasion a nausea; they were also pure and liquid, having no impure mixture in them. [456]

He again calls them his people, but for the sake of reproaching them; for the less

[456] The general drift of this verse is no doubt given here, though the version seems not to be correct. The early versions and the Targum are all different, and hardly present any meaning at all. The versions of Blayney and Horsley are not much better. Venema appears to have given the most satisfactory version, which is as follows, — Will any one forsake for a rock A field irrigated by the snow of Libanus? Shall for strange waters Be abandoned cold streams? To make the two clauses alike, the preposition {{מ is put before ``waters,'' which is found before ``rock.'' ``Strange waters'' were those conducted to a place by artificial means. But to give {מ} the meaning which it often has, rather than, the verse may be thus rendered, --- Shall it be forsaken, rather than the rock, The field watered by the snow of Libanus? Shall they be abandoned rather than strange waters, The cooling streams (or rills)? The change proposed in the last verb is unnecessary, as both verbs are nearly of the same meaning. The second line literally rendered is, ``The field of the snow of Libanus;'' so called as being irrigated by the melted snow from that mountain. To prefer a rocky dry ground for such a field, symbolized the conduct of the Jews, as well as to prefer waters brought by pipes from a distance to refreshing streams. --- Ed.

excusable was their perverseness, when God in an especial manner offered himself to them, and they refused his offered bounty. Had this been done by heathens it would have been no small sin, though God had not favored them with any remarkable privilege, but when the Jews had been chosen in preference to all others, it was as it were a monstrous thing that they forgot God, even him whom they had known. He was unknown to heathens, but he had made himself known to the Jews; hence this forgetfulness, with which the Prophet charged them, could not have proceeded from ignorance, but from determined perverseness.

He afterwards adds, In vain [457] they burn incense to me, since to stumble, etc., (the copulative is to be rendered as a causal particle.) When he says, in vain they burn incense, it is to anticipate an objection. For we know that the Jews trusted in their ceremonial rites, so when they were reproved by the Prophets they had ever ready this answer, ``We are the worshippers of God, for we constantly go up to the Temple, and he has promised that the incense which we offer shall be to him a sweet odor.'' He at the same time includes under this word all the sacrifices, for it is said generally of them all, ``A sweet odor shall ascend before the Lord.'' Then by mentioning one thing he denotes all that external worship in which the Jews were sufficiently assiduous. But as the whole was nothing but hypocrisy, when the integrity of the heart was absent, the Prophet here dissipates this vain objection, and says, ``In vain do they set forth their ceremonial rites, that they attend very regularly to their sacrifices, and that they do not neglect anything in the external worship of God: it is all in vain,'' he says.

This truth is often referred to by the Prophets, and ought to be well known by the godly; yet we see how difficult it is to bring the world to believe it. Hypocrisy ever prevails, and men think that they perform all that is required of them when some kind of religion appears among them. But God, as we have before seen, has regard to the heart itself or integrity; yet this is what the world cannot comprehend. Therefore the Prophets do not without reason so often inculcate the truth, that inward piety, connected with integrity of heart, alone pleases God.

He afterwards mentions the cause --- that they made them to stumble in their ways He means here no doubt the false teachers, who allured the people from the true and simple worship of God, and corrupted wholesome doctrine by their many fictions. And it is a common thing in Hebrew to leave a word, as we have said elsewhere, to be understood: they then made them to stumble, or to fall. The meaning is, that the sacrifices of the people could not be approved by God, because the whole of religion was corrupted. And the crime the Prophet names was, that the people were drawn aside from the right way, that is, from the law, which is alone the rule of piety and uprightness.

But we hence learn how frivolous is the excuse of those who say, that they follow what they have learnt from the fathers, and what has been delivered to them from the ancients, and received by universal consent; for God here declares, that

[457] So the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Targum, but the Syriac and Arabic are like our version, “to vanity,” the idol being often so called: and this is the most suitable rendering here, as it shews the object of their worship when they forsook Jehovah. The word may be rendered “to a lie,” or, what is meant, “to a false god.” See Romans 1:25. — Ed.

the destruction of the people would follow, because they suffered themselves to be deceived by false prophets.

As to the words in their ways, or in their own ways, interpreters differ, and many apply the pronoun {הם}, em, to the false Prophets; but I prefer the other view, that they made them to stumble in their right ways, for by errors they led them away from the right course. When therefore he says, in their ways, the words are to be taken in a good sense; for God had pointed out the right way to the people. He then calls the doctrine of the law the ways to which the people had been accustomed. Then follows the expression, the paths of ages, which is to be taken in the same sense. But we must notice the contrast between those paths, and the way not trodden [458]

This brevity may be deemed obscure; I will therefore give a more explicit explanation. The Prophet calls those the ways of the people in which they had been fully taught; and this took away every color of defense; for the people could not object and say that they had been deceived, as though they had not known what was right; for they had not only been taught, but had also been led as it were by the hand, so that the way of the law ought to have been well known by them. Then he adds, the paths of ages; for as the law had not been introduced a short time before, but for many ages, this antiquity ought to have strengthened their faith in God's law. We now see how these two things bear on what is said, that the Jews, being deceived by false teachers, fell or stumbled in those ways to which they had been accustomed; and then in the paths of ages, that is, in the doctrine long before received, and whose authority had been for many ages established. On the other hand, he says that the Jews had been drawn to paths and to a way not trodden, that is, had been led from the right way into error. And he farther aggravates their sin by saying, that they preferred to go astray rather than to keep the way which had been trodden by their fathers.

But it may be here asked, whether this change in itself ought to be condemned, since we despise antiquity, or rather regard what is right? To this the easy reply is, that the Prophet speaks here in the name of God' therefore this principle ought to be maintained, that there is no right way but what God himself has pointed out. Had any one else come and boasted antiquity, the Prophet would have laughed to scorn such boasting, and why? for what antiquity can be in men who vanish away? and when we count many ages, there is nothing constant and sure among men. It ought then to be noticed, that God. was the author of that way which the Prophet complains had been forsaken by the people, how the things which follow harmonize together, that the people had strayed from the way which they had long kept; for the Jews, as it has been said, had not followed any men, but God himself, who had been pleased to stretch forth his hand to them and to shew them the sure way of salvation; and we must also observe what sort of people were the fathers, even such as had followed God, and when they had such examples, they ought to have been

[458] I propose the following rendering of the verse, — For forsaken me have my people; To vanity they burn incense, And make them stumble in their ways, The paths of ages; So that they walk in the tracks Of a way not prepared; literally, not cast up or raised. That “they” were the false priests is evident, because to burn incense was the office of the priests. To stumble in God’s ways is to transgress his law; and these “ways” were “the paths of ages,” or, of antiquity, or, “ancient paths,” as they had for ages been made known to the people. — Ed.

more and more stimulated to imitate them.

It was therefore an inexcusable wickedness to forsake a way found good by long experience, the way of ages, which had been approved for a long time, and to depart into paths not trodden, for by no example, of the saints who were alone the true fathers, had they been led to devise for themselves new and fictitious modes of worship, and also to depart from the plain doctrine of the law. Had any one answered, that these ways had been long trodden, because they had both the Assyrians and the Egyptians as associates in their superstitions, such an exception could not be admitted, for the Prophet, as I have said, does not speak indiscriminately of any kind of examples, but of the examples of the fathers, who had been ruled and led by the Lord. It follows ---

Jeremiah 18:16

16. To make their land desolate, and a perpetual hissing; terrain every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head.

16. Ad ponendum terram eorum in vastitatem, (hoc est, ut ponam terram eorum in vastitatem.) in sibila perpetua; quisquis transibit per eam obstupescet et movebit caput.

The Prophet again denounces the punishment which they deserved, that desolation awaited the land. It would be, he says, their reward to have the land reduced to a solitude, and also to perpetual hissings. The word {עולם} oulam, which the Prophet had just used, is here also used, but in a different sense, for when he said, the paths of ages, he referred to past time, but now to a future time. As then the Jews had alienated themselves from the ways of ages, that is, from the eternal verity of God, so now he says, that their land would be for the hissings of ages, for the dreadful calamity now at hand would not be for a few years but to the end of the world.

And in the second clause he expresses more clearly what he meant by eternal hissings, that every one passing through it would be astonished and move or shake his head, [459] as one does either in amazement, or in contempt, or in abhorrence; this kind of speaking often occurs in the Prophets. The land of Canaan, after having been given to the Jews, became as it were an extraordinary country, in which all kinds of opulence appeared, for God poured upon it the invaluable treasures of his bounty, so that the very sight of it filled all with admiration; on the other hand, it became the scene of horror and an object of hissing when God cursed it. A confirmation then follows ---

Jeremiah 18:17

17. I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will shew them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.

17. In vento orientali, (vel, per ventum orientalem; quidam legunt {כ} loco ,{ב} et dicunt, tanquam ventus orientalis; sed quod ad mentem Prophetoe spectat nulla est ambiguitas, per ventum ergo orientalem,) dispergam eos coram facie inimici; cervicem, non faciem ostendam ipsis (videre ipsos faciam) in die calamitatis ipsorum, (vel, interitus, ut alii vertunt.)

Though no word of comparison is expressed, if we read {ב}, beth, and not {כ},

[459] More literally, "And shall nod with his head." — Ed.

caph, yet the Prophet employs a comparison, for God did not drive away the Jews by an eastern wind, but as the force of that wind is violent in Judea, the eastern wind often means a storm or a whirlwind, as though he had said, ``As by a whirlwind or a storm will I cast them out.'' [460] I will disperse or dissipate them, he says, before the face of the enemy. He means that enemies would come to exterminate the Jews from the land; and he adds another thing, that these enemies would be full of terror, for God would give them the force of a whirlwind or a storm to disperse and scatter the Jews, for being terrified by God they would not dare to withstand.

Then follows a commination, that God would turn to them the neck, or the back, and not the face in the day of calamity. It sometimes happens that we are severely chastised by God, he thus often tries his faithful people when he subjects them to the will of the ungodly; but yet all remedy is not taken away from them, as they find consolation in God's mercy, for as he casts down so he raises up, as he puts to death so he gives life, according to what is said in 1 Samuel 2:6. But God here denounces a punishment without any prospect of pardon or alleviation, I will scatter them, he says, as by an east wind before their enemies. Then he adds, ``In vain shall they flee to me and seek my mercy, though otherwise it is offered to all, yet then they shall implore it in vain, for it is decreed not to pardon them. I will shew to them my back, (or neck, for {ערף}, oreph, is the hinder part of the head, but here it means the back,) they shall then find that I am turned away from them, so that they shall not be set before my eyes.'' For it is an invaluable consolation when God is pleased to look on our miseries, but he deprives the Jews of this hope, for he would turn to them his back in the day of slaughter. I cannot proceed farther now.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that we may in due time anticipate thy wrath, and never so kindle it by our perverseness as to preclude every remedy; and then also when thou for a time chastisest us, do not wholly cast us away, but let this resort ever remain to us, to seek thee in the day of calamity and to find thee accessible, so that being reunited to thee we may find that thou rememberest mercy even in wrath, until we shall enjoy a full and real participation of thy favor and paternal love in thy celestial kingdom, which has been procured for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Seventy-Second

Jeremiah 18:18

18. Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.

18. Et dixerunt, Venite, et cogitemus contra Jeremiam cogitationes, quia non peribit Lex a sacerdote, et consilium a sapiente, et sermo a Propheta: venite, et percutiamus eum lingua, neque attendamus ad cunctos sermones, ejus.

Here Jeremiah relates how great was the fury which seized the minds of those on

[460] Many copies read {,{ל though all the versions retain the ;{כ} ``As a burning wind will I scatter them,'' is the version of the Septuagint and the Vulgate; ``As a hot wind,'' etc, is the Syriac. --- Ed

whom he had denounced the vengeance of God. It was no doubt a dreadthl thing to hear, that when they should be in a state of despair, no aid from God could be expected: for this is the import of what we have observed, --- ``In the day of their calamity I will shew them my back and not my face;'' that is, ``They shall see my back and not my face.'' As then there was no hope of pardon remaining for them, was it not a monstrous stupidity not to be moved and humbled, when they saw that God was thus angry with them? But the Prophet shews, that his denunciation was heedlessly despised by them; nay, that there was such obstinacy in their wickedness, that they then more stoutly prepared themselves for battle. For he says that they avowedly conspired against him, after he had warned them of God's dreadful judgment.

And he introduces them as encouraging one another, Come, and let us think thoughts against Jeremiah. We may observe what it was that they set up against God's judgment, even their own counsels and purposes: this was in a word to transfer authority from God to themselves. They thus deprived God of his right, and sought to occupy his throne, as though they were the judges and could subject to their own will whatever the Prophet had declared. It is indeed probable, that they did not avowedly or designedly carry on war with God; for hypocrites raise up for themselves mists and clouds, by which they wilfully bring darkness on themselves. In the meantime a diabolical fury possesses them, so that they make no account of God; for were they really to consider the truth brought to them, they might easily understand it. Whence then is this violent fury and madness, that when they seek to contend with man, they really fight with God? Even because their impiety and pride, as I have said, so blinds them, that they hesitate not to rob God of his honor, and thus they put themselves in his place.

The same thing is to be seen now under the whole Papacy: for when they conspire among themselves to oppose plain truths, they do not ask at the mouth of God, nor regard anything taught in the Scriptures, but are satisfied with trumpeting forth their rotten decrees, or rather dreams, in which there is nothing, however futile, which they do not regard as an oracle: and when they bring forth their bulls, they think themselves sufficiently fortified, as though God were deprived of his own right. But this will appear more fully from the context.

They said, For perish shall not the law from the priest [461] This reason, which they added, shews whence that security arose, through which they hesitated not to reject the words of the Prophet: there were priests and prophets who occupied a place in the Church, and who boasted of their titles, though they were nothing but mere masks, having no care to possess what their calling required. Thus the vizarded priests were satisfied with an honorable vocation, and cared nothing for the account that was to be rendered to God: and thus in all ages hypocrites have abused the gifts of God. This is seen most clearly under the Papacy. For doubtless when all things are well examined, we find that the Pope and all his party mainly rely on these weapons;

[461] It would be better to render this, "The law cannot perish," etc.; for the future with a negative may often be thus rendered: {,{כ translated, ``For,'' often means certainly, truly, surely, doubtless, and might be so translated here, --- Surely, not perish can the law from the priests, Or counsel from the wise, Or the word from the Prophet. These things they thought were impossibilities. How like are errors and the delusions of men in every age! ``The word'' was what the prophets taught and preached: hence ``the word'' in the New Testament often means the preaching of the gospel --- Ed.

for when they are a hundred times conquered by proofs from Scripture, they still strenuously defend themselves with this one shield, --- That the Church cannot err, that the Church is represented by the Pope, the bishops, and the whole clergy, and also that those whom they call prelates are successors of the Apostles: and so they boastingly thunder out a continual succession from Peter. They at length conclude, that the Church of Rome is the mother of all the faithful, and also that the Holy Spirit dwells there; for whosoever succeeds in the place of Peter and occupies his chair, is endued with the same spirit and the same authority. We hence see, that the Papists at this day contend with us with no other weapons than those with which all the ungodly reprobates assailed Jeremiah.

They said first, that it would be enough if they had their own thoughts, that is, if they resolved among themselves what was necessary to be done; for under the word thoughts, they included decrees as well as deliberations; as though they had said, --- ``We possess an ordinary jurisdiction; for God has set us over his Church: whatever then proceeds from us, ought to be deemed inviolable. The reason is, because the law cannot perish from the priest, and counsel cannot perish from the wise, nor the word from the Prophets.'' These three things were very speciously brought against Jeremiah; nor could it have been denied, but that there were legitimate priests as to their vocation, that there was also a church, and that the elders, who were connected with the priests, justly boasted of their dignity; and lastly, that the people ever had their prophets. We hence see that they could have alleged very specious offenses against God's Prophet, by which they might have easily deceived the simple. If a cornparison be made, doubtless the whole Papal system, cannot justly have any such pretensions; but they are far inferior to those of the Jews. For when they say that they represent the Church, that is disputed; and they are at length constrained to come to this point --- to define what the Church is: and when it is settled what the Church is, we are then to inquire whether the bishops or prelates are legitimate. Now their calling is not founded on the word of God; for they are all schismatics; and this appears from their own canons, as there is among them, at this day, no canonical election. It then follows that their calling, of which they are so foolishly and arrogantly proud, comes to nothing. But let us allow them to be lawful ministers, and their calling to be approved according to God's word, it does not yet hence follow that they are true ministers of God, that is, because they hold an ordinary station and jurisdiction in the Church. For we find that in all ages the Church of God has been subject to the evil of having wolves occupying the place of pastors, of having impious and perfidious men daring to oppose God in his own name.

As it thus happened formerly, neither the Pope nor all his masked bishops can shew any difference in the present day, why we ought not to dread wolves: how so?

``There were formerly,'' says the Apostle, ``false prophets, so also there will be false teachers among you.'' (2 Peter 2:1)

He shews that at this time no less than formerly we ought to beware of false bishops, of false prophets, and of false teachers, however high their titles may be. When therefore the Papists vainly boast that the Church cannot err, they are justly objects of ridicule; for we see who those are whom they follow: as formerly the manifest

enemies of God contended with Jeremiah, even so now they openly oppose God by this vain pretense only --- they are priests, they are prophets, they are elders or presbyters, that is, they hold an ordinary jurisdiction. But this passage is sufficient to confute their folly; for they bring words instead of proof, and rely only on this argument --- ``The Church cannot err:'' and what the Prophet relates further, ``The law cannot perish from the priest,'' means the same thing. But we find elsewhere what God threatened, even that a dreadful judgment was at hand, when the wise would become blind, when the priests and prophets would become foolish and fatuitous. (Hosea 9:7; Isaiah 29:14.) But we may hence learn on what condition and for what purpose God everywhere honors the ministers and pastors of the Church with high eulogies: it is not certainly that they may be proud through a false pretense, but that they may faithfully execute their office.

However this may be, we see that it is a false confidence, when pastors allege that the law and the word or the truth, cannot depart from them, because they are, and are called priests.

They added, Come and let us smite him with the tongue. They again magnify their own authority, as the Papists do at this day, who, standing as it were on high, look down on us with contempt, and say, ``We must not dispute with heretics, for things formerly settled, and which the Church has once decreed, must not be called in question.'' For it seems very strange to them, and even unbecoming, when we ask a hearing and wish the controversies, by which the world is now disturbed, to be decided and removed, by the law, and the prophets, and the gospel. ``What! are then the Church's decrees to be reduced to nothing? The Scripture is a nose of wax; it has nothing sure or certain; it can be twisted to favor any party, and hypocrites always pervert the word of God; and therefore it follows that there is nothing certain or clear in the Scripture.'' This is to smite with the tongue, as we see to have been done to Jeremiah, --- ``Why should we dispute with that man, who so daringly threatens us, as though he was superior to others? but he is only one of the people; what need then of long disputation; for we have authority, and it will be enough by one word to determine, that whatever he brings is to be rejected. There is then no reason why we should weary ourselves by a long contest; for our tongue, as they say, decisively settles what is right.''

We see how the ungodly dared to set forward their own decrees, by which they tried to overwhelm the prophetic word and to take away the authority of Jeremiah. Whenever then men thus elevate themselves, so as to seek to smite God's servants with the tongue, and to suppress his word when spoken by them, we understand how to regard them, and what weight belongs to all their decrees or dceterminations. [462]

But the end of this verse shews more clearly how wantonly they despised ev-

[462] This phrase, "Let us smite him with the tongue," is thus literally rendered by the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Arabic; but by the Syriac, "Let us smite his tongue," and paraphrased by the Targum, "Let us testify against him false testimonies." "With our tongue," is Piscator's; that is, by accusations to the king; "For his tongue," is Junius's; that is, for his denunciations; "On the tongue," is Blaney's; that is, on the offending part, an allusion to a mode of punishment that was practiced; or, as Gataker suggests, in order to stop his mouth. The most probable meaning is, that they meant to accuse him before the authorities; therefore "with the tongue," as countenanced by the best versions, is the best rendering. "Let us accuse him, let us speak so ill of him, that no man may attend to him, but that all may flee from him," Cocceius. — Ed.

ery truth; for it is a proof of hopeless contumacy when no attention is paid to the prophetic word: Let us not attend, they said; that is, ``Let us not care for what he says, and let us boldly despise whatever he may speak.'' The Prophet, as I have said, meant by this expression to shew, that they were so blinded by a diabolical impulse, that they hesitated not to reject whatever proceeded from God, to close their ears and designedly to neglect it, as is usual with the wholly wicked. No less contempt is now to be seen under the Papacy; for were they calmly to hear us, were they to consider with tranquil minds and meek hearts what we allege, doubtless the matter would soon be settled between us. But their only resolution is, not to hear; for they are content with this fallacious prejudice, --- that as they represent the Church, it is in their power to condemn whatever we say, and that when they have condemned us, there is no need of any disputation.

But we are hence reminded, that when men are guilty of many vices, there is yet some hope of salvation remaining, provided they are not unteachable, and do not with resolute confidence reject what is proposed to them from the law, and the prophets, and the gospel. For as there are many diseases, and those grievous and dangerous, which yet may be healed, so also we ought to conclude that men are healable, as long as they bear to be taught, to be admonished and reproved; but when with closed ears they pass by every truth, when they despise all counsels, when they esteem as nothing God's threatenings and reproofs, then their salvation is hopeless. It follows ---

Jeremiah 18:19

19. Give heed to me, O LORD, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me.

19. Attende, Jehova, ad me, et audi vocem litigatorum meorum (hoc est, rixantium mecum.)

As the Prophet saw that his labor as to men was useless, he turned to God, as we find he had done often before. This way of speaking, no doubt, had more force than if he had continued to address the people. He might indeed have said, ``Miserable men! where are you rushing headlong? what means this madness? what at last do ye think will be the end, since ye are resisting God, being obstinate against his Spirit? for ye cannot extinguish the light by your perverseness or by your effrontery.'' The Prophet might have thus reproved them; but it betokens more vehemence, when he leaves men and addresses God, himself. This apostrophe then ought to be carefully noticed, for we hence gather that the madness of the Jews was reprobated, inasmuch as the Prophet did not deign to contend with them. But he notwithstanding said, ``As they do not attend, attend thou, Jehovah, to me.'' He saw that he was despised by God's enemies, and by this prayer he intimates, that his doctrine was in force before God, and retained its own importance and could not fail. Hence he says, Jehovah, regard me, and hear the voice of those who contend with me.

Here Jeremiah asks two things, --- that God would undertake his cause, and that he would take vengeance on the wantonness of his enemies. And this passage deserves especial notice, for it is a support which can never fail us, when we know that our service is approved by God, and that as he prescribes to us what to say, so what

proceeds from him shall ever possess its own weight, and that it cannot be effected by the ingratitude of the world, that any portion of the authority of celestial truth should be destroyed or diminished. Whenever then the ungodly deride us, and elude or neglect the truth, let us follow the example of the Prophet, let us ask God to look on us; but this cannot be done, except we strive with a sincere heart to execute what he has committed to us. Then a pure conscience will open a door for us, so that we may be able confidently to call on God as our guardian and defender, whenever our labor is despised by men.

He asks, in the second place, that God would hear the voice of those who contended with him. [463] We hence conclude, that the wicked gain nothing by their pride, for they provoke God more and more, when they thus oppose his pure doctrine and contend against his prophets and faithful teachers. Since then we see that the ungodly effect nothing, except that they kindle God's wrath the more, we ought to go on more courageously in the discharge of our office; for even when for a time they suppress by their great clamours the truth of God, he will yet check them, and so check them, that the doctrine, which is now subverted by unjust calumnies, may shine forth more fully. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 18:20

20. Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them.

20. An reddetur pro bono malum? quia foderunt foveam animae meae; recordare quod steterim coram facie tua ad loquendum proipsis in bonum, ad avertendam iracundiam tuam ab ipsis.

The Prophet in this verse exaggerates the sin of his enemies, for they not only were ferocious against God, but also forgot everything humane, and wickedly assailed the Prophet himself. Impiety is indeed more detestable than inhumanity, inasmuch as God is far above all mortals; but inhumanity has in it more basenes, for it is, so to speak, more gross and more evident. The ungodly often hide their perfidy; but when they come to act towards men, then it appears immediately what they are. Hence the Prophet, having made known the impiety of his enemies, now adds, that they, when tried by the judgment of men, were found to be wholly intolerable, for they rendered a shameful reward to an innocent man who was sedulous in securing their salvation. We now understand the meaning of the Prophet.

Though it often happens that evil is rendered for good, and ingratitude is a common vice, yet nature itself detests ingratitude: hence it has been said that there is no law against the ungrateful, because ingratitude seems a monstrous thing. As then nature dictates that merit deserves a reward, and this ought to be a fixed principle in the hearts of all, the Prophet reasons according to the common sense and judgment of all mankind.

Shall evil, he says, be rendered for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul?

[463] "The voice of my justification," is the Septuagint, "the voice of my adversaries," the Vulgate; "the voice of my oppression," the Syriac, "the voice of my strife," the Arabic. But the best is our version and that of Calvin. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Syriac are wholly wrong: for the verb {{ריב never means any one of the ideas which they convey. --- Ed.

[464] and yet I prayed for them, and endeavored to turn away the wrath of God. Since I have set myself humbly to pray for their salvation, how great is their savageness and inhumanity in persecuting me? But as he saw that it was vain to speak to the deaf, he again appeals to God as a witness to his integrity; Remember, he says, that I stood before thy face to speak for them; as though he had said, ``Even if malignity prevent men to own what I am, and how I have conducted myself towards them, God will be to me a sufficient witness, and I shall be satisfied with his judgment.'' It then follows ---

Jeremiah 18:21

21. Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and let their men be put to death; let their young men be slain by the sword in battle.

21. Propterea pone filios eorum ad famem (hoc est, projice, vel, prostitue ad famem,) et diffunde (vel, diffluere fac) eos ad manus gladii, et sint mulieres eorum orbae et viduae, et viri eorum sint percussi ad mortem (lethaliter,) juvenes eorum sint percussi gladio in praelio.

The Prophet seems here to have been driven through indignation to utter imprecations which are not consistent with a right feeling; for even if Christ had not said with his own mouth, that we are to pray for those who curse us, the very law of God, ever known to the holy fathers, was sufficient. Jeremiah then ought not to have uttered these curses, and to have imprecated final destruction on his enemies, thouglt they fully deserved it. But it must be observed, that he was moved not otherwise than by the Holy Spirit, to become thus indignant against his enemies; for he could not have been excused on the ground that indignation often transgresses the bounds of patience, for the children of God ought to bear all injuries to the utmost; but, as I have said, the Prophet here has announced nothing rashly, nor did he allow himself to wish anything as of himself, but obediently proclaimed what the Holy Spirit dictated, as his faithful instrument.

We have said elsewhere, that the first thing to be noticed is, that when we pray for any evil on the wicked, we ought not to act on private grounds; for he who has a regard to himself, will ever be led away by too strong an impulse; and even when our prayers are calmly and rightly formed, we are yet ever wrong, when we consult our private advantages or redress our own injuries. That is one thing. And secondly, we ought to have that wisdom which distinguishes between the elect and the reprobate. But as God bids us to suspend our judgment, inasmuch as we cannot surely know what will take place to-morrow, we ought not to imitate indiscriminately the Prophet in praying God to destroy and scatter ungodly men of whom we despair; for, as it has been stated, we are not certain what has been decreed in heaven. In short, whosoever is disposed, after the example of Jeremiah, to pray for a curse on his enemies, must be ruled by the same spirit, according to what Christ said to his disciples; for

[464] It is better to render these lines like the Septuagint and Vulgate, — Is not evil rendered for good? For they have dug a pit for my soul. Or thus, — Should evil be rendered for good? — For they have dug a pit for me. So should "soul" be rendered here and in many other places. There is here an allusion to the practice of digging pits to take wild beasts. — Ed.

as God destroyed the wicked at the request of Elijah, the Apostles wished Christ to do the same by fire from heaven; but he said,

``Ye know not by what spirit ye are, ruled.'' (Luke 9:55)

They were unlike Elijah, and yet; wished like apes to imitate what he did.

But, as I have said, let first all regard to our own benefit or loss be dismissed, when we would shew ourselves indignant against the wicked; and secondly, let us have the spirit of wisdom and discretion; and lastly, let all the turbulent feelings of the flesh be checked, for as soon as anything human be mixed with our prayers, some confusion will ever be found. There was nothing turbulent in this imprecation of Jeremiah, for the Spirit of God ruled his heart and his tongue, and then he forgot himself; and lastly, he knew that they were reprobate and already doomed to final ruin. He therefore hesitated not, through the prophetic spirit, to imprecate on them what we here read. And there is no doubt but that he was ever solicitous for the remnant, for he knew that there were some faithful; and though they were unknown, he yet prayed God for them. But he fulminates here against the reprobate who were already given up to ruin. This is the reason why he hesitated not to pray that they might be delivered up to famine and given to the sword, [465] so that their women might be bereaved and become widows, and their men put to death, [466] and their youth smitten by the sword. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 18:22

22. Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them: for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet.

22. Audiatur clamor ex aedibus eorum cum induxeris super eos exercitum repente; quia foderunt foveam ad capiendum me, laqueos occultarunt pedibus meis.

He proceeds with his imprecation, he then wishes that a cry should he heard from the houses, as though he had said, ``Let there be no refuge for them when their calamity shall happen:'' For his own house is to every one his place of safetyin a disordered state of things. The Prophet then wished them to be slain by their enemies even when concealed in their houses; for it appears from the preceding verse that he meant slaughter. For why should a cry be, except on account of enemies breaking in and raging against them, while they, being not able to defend their life, were driven to lamentations and howlings? Let a cry then be heard from their houses, when thou bringest an army upon them suddenly; and he adds: For they have digged a pit to take me

The Prophet indeed seems here to be the defender of his own cause: but there is no doubt, but that apart from anything personal, he hated the impiety of those of

[465] The rendering of this line is various: our version, “pour out,” etc., cannot be sustained; nor “drain them,” etc., by Blayney. The idea generally given by the versions and the Targum to the verb, is that of giving up, delivering, committing. The Syriac seems to give the original correctly, “deliver them into the hands of the sword;” only the verb {,{הדג signifies to draw or drive rather than to deliver. Perhaps the literal rendering would be, ``drive them on the hands of the sword,'' as though the sword was a person with hands stretched cut to receive what might come in its way: but ``hands'' in this instance mean power; so that the best version would be, And deliver them into the power of the sword.

[466] Literally, “the slain of death,” as in the next line, “the smitten of the sword.” The two lines are literally thus, — And let their men be the slain of death; Their youths the smitten of the sword in battle. “Death” here, notwithstanding what Horsley has said, evidently means pestilence. See Jeremiah 15:2. The “men” were those past the time of ervice, and “youths” or young men were those fit for war. — Ed.

whom he speaks, because they insidiously assailed him, when yet he was doing the work of God. For the Prophet neither sowed nor reaped for himself, but only labored to obey God. When therefore they artfully assailed and circumvented him, what was it but openly to carry on war with God? Let us then remember, that the Prophet does not here complain of troubles which he underwent, or of injuries, but that he only pleads a public cause; for these ungodly men treated him perfidiously, while he was doing nothing else but spending his labor for God, and indeed for their salvation. At last he adds ---

Jeremiah 18:23

23. Yet, LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me: forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee; deal thus with them in the time of thine anger.

23. Et tu Jehovah nosti omnia consilia eorum super me in mortem; ne propitius sis (vel, placabilis) super iniquitate eorum, et peccatum eorum (vel, scelus eorum) a facie tua ne deleas (quidam existimant {תמחי} esse in kal, et {י} pont loco {ה},) et sint impingentes coram facie tua, in die excandescentiae tuae fac cum ipsis.

I shall not be able to explain this verse to-day.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou exhortest us daily, and even constantly to repent, by the doctrine of thy Gospel, and shewest thyself to us reconcilable, --- O grant, that we may not disregard so incomparable a benefit, but with resigned minds devote ourselves wholly to thee, and that we may not so far provoke thy wrath as to be altogether reiected by thee, and to find at last that there is no mercy for us; but may we anticipate extreme judgment, while the time of thy good-will continues, and thus embrace the benefit of reconciliation which thou offerest to us, so that being thankful to thee and accepted in thine only-begotten Son, we may proceed in the course of our vocation, until we shall at length enjoy that eternal inheritance which thine only-begotten Son has obtained for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Seventy-Third

The words of the last verse of the eighteenth chapter we gave yesterday. Let us now see what the Prophet means by them, and what fruit we ought to gather from them. He says, that God was a witness of the wickedness of his enemies --- that all their counsels had in view his destruction. There is, moreover, to be understood a contrast, --- that the Prophet, as we have before seen, cared faithfully for their salvation. It was then a most base ingratitude in them to plot the death of the holy Prophet, who was not only innocent, but highly deserved their thanks for laboring for their salvation. We hence conclude that they deserved no mercy. Thou knowest, he says, their counsel, that what they consult among themselves tends to bring death on me: be not thou then propitious to their iniquity, and blot not out their sin

We said in our last lecture that this vehemence, as it was dictated by the Holy Spirit, is not to be condemned, nor ought it to be made an example of, for it was peculiar to the Prophet to know that they were reprobates: and we also shewed why no common law is to be made from particular examples: for Jeremiah was endued with the spirit of wisdom and judgment, and zeal also for God's glory so ruled in

his heart, that the feelings of the flesh were wholly subdued, or at least brought under subjection; and farther, he pleaded not a private cause. We said in the first place, that it was oracular; for God designed to make it known, that they who thus obstinately resisted true doctrine were reprobate and irreclaimable. As all these things fall not to our lot, we ought not indiscriminately to imitate Jeremiah in this prayer: for that would then apply to us which Christ said to his disciples,

``Ye know not what spirit, governs you.'' (Luke 9:55.)

And doubtless it ought to fill us with dread when we hear, Be not propitious to them, nor blot out their sin. God testifies in many plaices that he is gracious and inclined to mercy, and that when he is angry it is only for a moment. (Numbers 14:18; Psalm 103:8; Psalm 30:5) There seems then a great difference between the words of the Prophet and these testimonies, by which God makes known his own nature. But we have said already that the destruction of the people, against whom the Prophet thus prayed, had been made evident to him: and we must also bear in mind what we have stated, that he did not include the people without exception; for he knew that there was a seed remaining among them. He then confined his imprecation to the reprobate and irreclaimable, as he knew that they were already doomed to ruin, even by the eternal purpose of God' and as they had over and over again destroyed themselves, he boldly declares that God would never be propitious to them.

To the same purpose is what follows, Let them ever stumble before thy face. He mentions face here for manifest judgment; for the wicked exult as long as he spares them. The Prophet then would have God to sit on his throne, that he might appear as a Judge, and thus check the wantonness of those who despised his judgment, being constrained to know that they could not escape. There is also a contrast to be understood here between the presence and the absence of God. For hypocrites think that God is absent as long as he is indulgent to them and does not take vengeance hence they grow wanton, as though they had a permission to deceive him: but when God constrains them to acknowledge what they are unwilling to do, they are said to stand in his presence; for they are pressed too near to render it possible for them to evade, and willing or unwilling they are held fast, as the Lord proves that he is their Judge. We hence see the meaning of the expression when the Prophet says, Let them stumble before thy face.

He in the last place adds, In the time of thy wrath deal thus with them. The manner of his presence is set forth. There is, however, no doubt but that the Prophet here checks both himself and all the godly, that they may not be hasty, for we are often too precipitant in our wishes; for we would that God would fulminate every moment from heaven. This hastiness ought to be moderated; and the Prophet here prescribes to us the rule of moderation, by saying, In the time of thy wrath; as though he had said, ``Even though thou deferrest and seemest now to connive at these great crimes, yet the time will eventually come in which thou wilt take vengeance on the reprobate.''

Whenever then the Scripture speaks of the time of God's wrath, let us know that under this form of speaking there is an exhortation to patience, so that excessive ardor may not lead us beyond the limits of moderation, but that we may wait with

resigned minds until the due time of judgment comes. This is one thing; but at the same time the Prophet expresses also something more: for he would have the reprobate of whom he speaks, to be so involved in endless judgment as never to be able to extricate themselves. It is said in Psalm 106:4,

``Remember me, O Lord, with the favor of thy people,''

that is, ``O Lord, this only I ask, to be joined to thy people; for even when thy Church is afflicted and deemed miserable, it will still be enough for me to be of the number of those whom thou honorest with thy paternal favor.'' The favor then of God's people is that paternal regard which he entertains for his Church. So, on the other hand, the time of wrath is that judgment by which God devotes the reprobate to eternal perdition, so that there is no hope of salvation remaining for them. Deal thou with them, but when? even in the time of thy wrath; that is, deal with them as thou art wont to deal with thine irreclaimable enemies, to whom thou wilt never be reconcilable. [467] This is the meaning. Now another discourse follows.

[467] The last line in the Syriac is, — In the time of thine indignation act against them. "Take vengeance on them," is the paraphrase of the Targum. Horsley would have it," deal with them," leaving out "thus" in our version. It is no doubt an expression which includes more than what is stated. It may be rendered "do for them," that is, wholly destroy them; — Ed.

Chapter 19

CHAPTER 19

Jeremiah 19:1-3

1. Thus saith the LORD, Go and get a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests;

1. Sic dicit Jehova, Vade et acquire (alii vertunt, posside; et {קנה} significat utrunque, sed hic non convenit verbum possidendi; acquire tibi) lagenam figuli testaceam, et quidem cum senioribus populi, et cum senioribus sacerdotum:

2. And go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee:

2. Et egredere ad vallem filii Hinnom, quae est in introitu portae orientalis, (alii vertunt, fictilis,) et clama illic (hoc est, alta voce pronuntia) sermones quos loquutus fuero ad te;

3. And say, Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle.

3. Et dices, Audite sermonem Jehovae, reges Jehudah et incolae Jerusalem, Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Ecce adduco malum super locum hunc, de quo quisque audierit, tinnient aures ejus.

We see that the Prophet was sent by God to shew the people that there was no firmness in that state of which hypocrites boasted; for God, who had favored the people of Israel with singular benefits, did no less retain them in his own possession than the potter. The Prophet had before shewn to the Jews that the potter formed his vessels as he pleased, and also, that when he had taken the clay and the vessel did not please him, he formed another. This prophecy has a similar import, yet it is different, as we shall presently see. The Prophet is here bidden to buy an earthen vessel of the potter, and at the meeting of the people to break it, that all might understand that they were like earthen vessels, and that being thus admonished of

their fragility, they might no longer be proud, as though they possessed a firm and perpetual state of happiness.

The main object of the two visions is, however, the same: for the Jews thought that they were not subject to the common lot of men, because they had been chosen as a peculiar people; nor would they have gloried in vain with regard to that inestimable privilege, had there been a mutual agreement between God and them; but as they were covenant-breakers, their glorying was vain and foolish, in thinking that God was bound to them. For what right had they to claim this privilege? God indeed had adopted the whole race of Abraham, but there was a condition introduced,

``Walk before me and be perfect.'' (Genesis 17:2)

When they all had become apostates, the covenant, as to them, was abolished. Then God could not have been called, as it were, to an account, as though he had violated his covenant with them, for he owed them nothing. They had become aliens; for through their wickedness and perfidy they had departed from him. God then designed to show how vain and how false was their confidence, when they said, ``We are a holy race, we are God's heritage;'' because they had wholly departed from the covenant which God had made with their fathers.

But in the form adopted, as I have said, there is some difference. The Prophet had before introduced the potter to shew that there was no less power in God than in a mortal man, because we are before him as the clay, so that he can form and destroy his vessels as he pleases: but here the Prophet shews, that though the Jews had been formed for a time, and so formed as to have been like an excellent and a beautiful vessel, yet it was not a perpetual condition. And it is probable that when they had heard that God could, like the potter, form and re-form them, they had devised an evasion, according to what men usually do who deal sophistically with God, --- ``O, be it so, the potter can from the same clay form both a precious and a worthless vessel; but we are the precious vessel, and God has given us that form; for when he made a covenant with Abraham, he adorned him with this singular distinction: he afterwards brought our fathers out of Egypt, and then there was a better form added; and since at length he raised a kingdom among us with this promise, that the throne of David would be perpetual, it cannot possibly be otherwise than that we are to continue in our state.'' Hence the Prophet expresses here more than in the former prophecy, that not only God had the power of a potter in forming his vessels, but that when the vessel is already formed and possesses great splendor, it can again be broken: he stated this lest the Jews should object by saying, that the state in which they were under David and his posterity would be perpetual. He says, ``This is nothing: for the earthen vessel, though splendid and elegant in its form, can yet be broken in the third or fourth year no less than at the time when it is formed, and can be broken for ever,'' according to what is afterwards implied by the similitude.

We shall proceed now to the words: he says, Go and get for thee an earthen vessel. The Rabbins think the name given to the vessel to be factitious, as the grammarians say, that is, made from its sound; for it appears to have been a flagon or a bottle; and as the bottle has a narrow mouth, it makes this sound, {בקבק} bakbuk, when we drink from it; and hence they think the name is derived. There

is, however, no ambiguity as to the thing itself, that the word means a bottle, not only made of earth, but also either of glass or of wood. By adding the word {חרש} cheresh, he specifies what but {בקבק}, bekbek, is a general word. He then adds what is literally, From the elders, and interpreters think that the words ``bring with thee'' are to be understood; and as to the sense I agree with them, for we shall hereafter see, that in the presence of those who went with him he broke the vessel: it then follows that the elders here spoken of were taken by Jeremiah as his companions; but as {מ} mem, sometimes means ``with,'' as in the fifty-seventh chapter of Isaiah, (Isaiah 57:8)

``and made thee a covenant with them, {מהם}''

I take it to be of the same meaning here; and this is doubtless suitable here, for he was to go with the elders of the people and with the elders of the priests [468]

And he adds, Enter into the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is at the entrance of the east gate, rendered by some ``of the earthen gate,'' for which I see no reason; but I leave this to be examined by those who are more versed in the language. It is indeed thought that {ש}, shin, is changed here into {ס}, samech; but if we take the word as it is, it means ``solar,'' for {חרס} cheras, from which {חרסית} cherasit, is derived, signifies the sun; and it seems to have been called the solar gate by way of excellency, because it looked toward the rising sun. [469] I do not yet oppose the idea of those who think that the Prophet alludes to {חרש}, cheresh, of which he had spoken, and that he calls it the east gate, though it was as it were an earthen gate; for the two letters {ש}, shin, and {ס} samech, as it is well known, are closely allied. Cry there, he says, the words which I shall speak to thee.

I come now to the subject: God bids his Prophet to get from the potter an earthen vessel, and to do so in the presence of the elders; for it was necessary to have witnesses in a matter so important; and as the public safety of the people was concerned, it was God's purpose, lest the prophecy should be despised, that there should be present the gravest witnesses, suitable, and, as they say, authorized, or approved; and he calls them the elders of the people and of the priests; and no doubt they were chosen from a great number, even from among the priests who were chief. There were also Levites of the sons of Aaron; but there were then chief priests a large number; but, as they say, it was a turbulent rabble. They were chosen from those first orders who ruled the Church, and Jeremiah calls them the elders of the priests. There were also others chosen from the people who presided over the Church. And we know that there were two public functionaries, or, as they say, a twofold govern-

[468] The literal rendering of this verse I conceive to be the following, — "Thus saith Jehovah, go and get; bottle from the maker of earthenware, and some of the elders of the people and of the elders of the priests." The {,{מ of, or from, before elders, implies a part; and it is the idiom of the language not to put in ``some,'' --- ``get (or take) from the elders,'' etc. He was first to get the bottle, and then some of the elders. The Vulgate very strangely represents the Prophet as taking the bottle from the elders, omitting the ,{ו} and as taking it from both elders! --- Ed

[469] It appears that the valley of Hinnom was not to the east, but to the south of Jerusalem. See Joshua 15:8. The Keri and several copies read {{חרסית and it is given untranslated by the Septuagint the Syriac, and the Arabic. It is rendered ``earthen'' by the Vulgate, as though the ,{ס} as Calvin mentions, is substituted for .{ש} In this case it might be rendered ``the potsherd'' --- ``at the entrance of the gate, The potsherd.'' It was the gate, before which did lie all the broken vessels, and the dirt and filth from the Temple. For this reason it may be that the Targum renders it here, ``the gate of the dunghill.'' Parkhurst, however, takes the word as it is in the text, and gives this version, ``the gate of the burnings,'' so called because of the practice of burning children in the valley opposite the gate. See Jeremiah 7:31. All these names would properly designate the south gate. --- Ed.

ment: the priests were the rulers of the Church with regard to the law, so that their government was spiritual; there were also the elders of the people who managed civil affairs; but there were some things in which they ruled in common. We now then see what the Prophet meant by saying that he was bidden to call witnesses to see what is afterwards stated, and that they were taken partly from the priests and partly from the people.

He says; Enter into the valley of the son of Hinnom. This valley was in the suburbs, and was called {תפת} Tophet, as we shall hereafter see. It is thought that this name is derived from drums, because they did beat drums when infants were killed, lest their cry should excite any feeling of humanity. But, we shall again say something on the etymology of this word. In this valley they were accustomed to sacrifice and offer their children by casting them into the fire. Many indeed performed this in a different way, by purifying their children and carrying them round the fire, so that they felt only the flame and escaped unhurt. But there were those who wished to shew their zeal above others, whose ambition drove them farther, and they killed their children and then burnt them. But of this matter I have spoken elsewhere, and I shall now only briefly notice it. This opinion is not, what is commonly received; but it seems to me that it may be gathered from many parts of Scripture, that many killed their children, and that some only purified them. However this may have been, God justly abominated the sacrifice; for his will was that sacrifices should be offered only in one place. When any one offered a calf or a lamb in any other place than at Jerusalem, it was a spurious sacrifice; and the Jews ought to have followed what God had prescribed, and not to have done anything presumptuously, for obedience is ever better than any sacrifices.

But here there was a double crime; they left the Temple and sought to obtrude on God sacrifices against his expressed will; and then there was another crime still more atrocious, for they devoted their children to Baalim or to Baal, and not to the only true God. (I pass by now their slaughter and burning.) This then was the reason why the Prophet was commanded to go to this place. How detestable that service was to God appears dear from this, that the prophets give the name of hell to the valley of Hinnom, {הנם} {גיא} gia-enom. And we know that at the time of Christ it was the common name for hell; and whenever Christ speaks of Gehenna, he uses the word according to its common acceptation at that time. The word has indeed been corrupted by the Greeks, for it is properly {הנם} {גיא} gia-enom. But what does the word mean in the gospel? Hell itself; and whence was its origin? We indeed know how great and how incurable was the madness of those who gave themselves up to their own superstitions; for though the prophets strongly condemned the place, yet the people proceeded in their usual idolatry; it was therefore necessary to give the place a disgraceful name in order to render it more abominable.

It is now added, that the place was by the entrance of the east gate. As it was especially a celebrated gate, and as the sun, rising there, reminded them to behold the light which God had kindled for them in his law, it was a monstrous stupidity proudly to tread, as it were, under foot. the law of God in so renowned a place, and to profane his worship, as though they openly wished to shew that they esteemed

as nothing what God had commanded. If any still think that there is an allusion to the word {חרש} cheresh, before used, I offer no opposition; that is, though this gate was indeed oriental, it was yet as it were an earthen gate.

He says, Cry there, or, proclaim with a clear voice, the words which I shall speak to thee. The Prophet no doubt said this expressly, in order to add more weight to his prophecy. He indeed did nothing but by God's command; but as his authority was not acknowledged by the Jews, he here testifies for their sakes that he would say nothing but what God himself would command. This preface then confirmed the authority of his prophecy, so that the Jews might not reject what he might say, as though it came from Jeremiah himself.

But a general doctrine may be hence gathered, --- that ministers are to bring forward nothing but what they have learnt from God himself. For though Jeremiah was a great man and endued with excellent gifts, yet he was not to bring one word or a syllable as from himself: how great then must be the presumption of those who seek to be superior to him by bringing their inventions, and at the same time demand to be deemed oracles? This passage confirms the doctrine of Peter, who says,

``He who speaks, let him speak the words of God.''
(1 Peter 4:11)

He now adds, Hear ye the word of Jehovah. This is a confirmation of the former sentence. We hence see why it was said, Cry, or, with a clear voice proclaim, what I shall say to thee; it was, that they might know that he spake not according to his own ideas as a man, but that he was a celestial herald to proclaim what God commanded. Hear, he says, ye kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. We see how the Prophet did not spare even kings, according to what God had before commanded him, that he should act boldly and shew no respect of persons, (Jeremiah 1:8.) He then faithfully performed his office, as he did not flatter kings, and was not terrified by their dignity and power. But he addressed them first, and then the people, because they who had most grievously sinned, were made rightly to bear the first reproof. We hence see what the next passage means,

``Reprove mountains and chide hills,'' (Micah 6:1)

and also this passage,

``I have set thee over nations and kingdoms,''
(Jeremiah 1:10)

for heavenly truth ought to bring under subjection, as Paul says, everything high in the world, so that all the pride of man may be subdued. (2 Corinthians 10:5.) Kings indeed do very ill bear to be thus boldly treated; for they wish to be exempt from every law and to be free from every yoke. But if they now acknowledge not their subjection to God's word, they must at last come before his tribunal; and then they shall find how perversely they have abused their power. As to teachers, they ought, small and great, to teach after the example of Jeremiah; they ought to reprove and to rebuke, when necessary, without shewing any respect of persons.

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, and the God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing an evil on this place, of which whosoever shall hear, tingle shall his ears. The prophetic word had more power when the Jews were brought to the very place where the event was

exhibited, he might have said the same thing in the Temple or in the gate or in the palace of the king but his prophecy would not have been so effectual. We indeed know how much tardiness there is in men in general; but so great was then the obstinacy of the Jews, that however forcibly the truth might have been set forth, yet it was received with so much indifference, that it was neglected. God then intended to shew to them, as it were, the event itself. He says, Jehovah of hosts and the God of Israel; and he used these words, that they might know, as we have stated elsewhere, that they had to do with God, whose power is dreaded even by angels. And in order to shake off their foolish boasting, that they were the children of Abraham, --- ``God,'' he says, ``has sufficient power to chastise you, and the same is the God of Israel, whose name ye falsely and absurdly pretend to profess.'' These subjects I only in a brief manner handle, because I have explained them more fully elsewhere.

He says that such a calamity was nigh that place as would make the ears to tingle: when there is a violent noise, our ears are stunned, and there is at the same time a certain tingling or ringing. When a man is killed, or when ten or twelve men are slain, there is a dreadful cry; but in a great tumult occasioned by men perishing, such is the noise that it stuns in a manner the ears, like that which proceeds from cataracts; for the violent noise of the Nile, they say, causes some degree of deafness. So also the Prophet says here, I am bringing, says God, a calamity on this place, which shall not only terrify those who will hear of it, but also render them quite astonished, so that their ears shall tingle, as is the case when there is a violent and dreadful noise. The cause follows ---

Jeremiah 19:4-5

4. Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burnt incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents;

4. Propterea quod reliquerunt me et alienarunt locum hunc, et suffitum fecerunt in eo diis extraneis, quos non noverunt ipsi neque patres ipsorum, neque reges Jehudah; et implerunt locum hunc sanguine innocentium;

5. They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind:

5. Et extruxerunt excelsa (aedificarunt excelsa) ipsi Baal, ad comburendum filios suos igne in holocaustum ipsi Baal; quod non mandavi et non loquutus sum, et non ascendit super cor meum (vel, in cot meum.).

The reason is given why God would so severely deal with that place. We indeed know that hypocrites are ever ready with their answer; as soon as God threatens them, they bark and bring forward their evasions. The Prophet then shews that the judgment announced would be just, lest the Jews should pretend that it was extreme.

God first complains that he had been forsaken by them, because they had changed the worship which had been prescribed in his Law. And this is what ought to be carefully considered; for no one would have willingly confessed what Jeremiah charged upon them all; they would have said, --- ``We have not forsaken God, for we are the children of Abraham; but what we wish to do is to add to his worship;

and why should it be deemed a reproach to us, if we are not content with our own simple form of worship, and add various other forms? and we worship God not only in the Temple, but also in this place; and further, we do not spare our own children.'' But God shews by one expression that these were frivolous evasions; for he is not acknowledged except what he orders and commands is obediently received. Let us know, that God is forsaken as soon as men turn aside from his pure word, and that all are apostates who turn here and there, and do not follow what God approves.

Then he says that they had alienated the place. God had consecrated to himself the whole of Judea: he would not indeed have sacrifices offered to him in every place; but when the Jews worshipped him, as they were taught by Moses and the prophets, the whole land was as it were an altar and a temple to him. Then God complains that his authority in that part of the suburbs was taken away; as though he had said, --- ``The whole of Judea is my right and my jurisdiction, and Jerusalem is the royal palace in which I dwell; but ye, deluded beings, do by force take away my right and transfer it to another, as though one gave to a robber a place nigh a royal residence.'' Thus God justly complains that they had alienated that place [470]

But we must remember the reason, which immediately follows, because they had burned incense to Baal. They pretended, no doubt, the name of God; but yet it was a most preposterous superstition, when they worshipped inferior gods, as the Papists do at this day. The word Baal is sometimes used in the singular number by the prophets, and sometimes in the plural: but what is Baal? a patron. They were not content with one patron, but every one desired a patron for himself: hence under the words Baal and Baalim, the prophets characterized all fictition is modes of worship: when they worshipped God's name, they blended the worship of patrons, who had not been made known to them; hence he adds, They have made incense in it to foreign gods. He afterwards says, that these foreign gods were such as neither they nor their fathers nor their kings knew. By saying that they were gods unknown to their fathers as well as to themselves and to their kings, he no doubt calls their attention to the doctrine of the law, and to the many certain proofs by which they had found that he was the only true God.

The Jews might have raised such an objection as the Papists do at this day, --- that their modes of worship were not devised in their time, but that they had derived them from their ancestors. But God regarded as nothing those kings and the fathers, who had long before degenerated from true and genuine religion. It must be here observed, that true knowledge is connected with verity: for they who had first contrived new forms of worship, doubtless followed their own foolish imaginations; as when any one in the present day asks the Papists, why they weary themselves so much with their superstitions, good intention is ever their shield, --- ``O, we think that this is pleasing to God.'' Therefore rightly does God here repudiate their inventions as wholly vain, for they possess nothing solid or permanent. At the same time, he

[470] Perhaps the idea would be better expressed, if we were to say, “They had alienized the place,” or heathenized it, made it a heathen place. To alienate is to transfer a right or property from one to another. This was indeed true, for they separated as it were the place from God and transferred it to heathen deities. But the idea here seems to be, that they made the place heathenish: “and have heathenized this place.” “Alienated” is the Septuagint; “made it alien,” the Vulgate; “polluted,” the Syriac; and “defiled,” the Targum. — Ed.

by implication condemns the Jews for rejecting his law, whose authority had been established among them, so that they ought not to have entertained any doubt: for it would have been the greatest ingratitude to say, ``We know not who introduced the Law!'' God had indeed sanctioned the law by so many miracles, that it could not have been disputed; and they had also found by many evidences and proofs that he was the only brue God. tie had then been known by their fathers as well as by their kings, even by David and by all his godly successors. Hence their crime was exaggerated, by seeking for themselves foreign gods.

Now we also see how foolishly the Papists lay hold on this passage and similar passages, in order to commend their abominations by the pretext of antiquity, for vain are their disguises when they say, ``O, we have been thus taught by our ancestors, and we have the authority of kings.'' But the Prophet here does not speak of fathers indiscriminately; but by fathers he means those who had embraced the true and pure worship of God, as they had been taught by the law; and those kings were alone worthy of imitation, who had faithfully worshipped God according to the doctrine of the law: and thus he excludes all those fathers and kings who had degenerated from the law of Moses.

He at last adds, that that place was filled with the blood of innocents; for there they killed their children. And by this circumstance Jeremiah again amplifies the wickedness of the people; for they had not only despised God and his law, but also cruelly destroyed their innocent infants; and thus he proved them guilty not only of impiety and profaneness in vitiating the worship of God, but also of brutal and barbarous savageness in not sparing innocent blood.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast been pleased to shew to us the way in which we cannot err, provided we obey thee, --- O grant, that we may render ourselves really teachable and ready to obey, and never undertake anything but what we know is approved by thee, nor turn aside on the right hand or on the left; but continue in that form of worship which thou hast prescribed to us in thy word, so that we may be able to bear witness, not only before the world, but before thee and the holy angels, that we obediently follow thee; and may we never blend anything of our own, but with submissive minds worship thee alone, and strive to render ourselves wholly subject to thee, until having at length rendered to thee due service through the whole course of our life, we shall reach that blessed rest which thy Son has procured for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Seventy-Fourth

Jeremiah 19:6

6. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter.

6. Propterea ecce dies veniunt, dicit Jehova, et non (hoc est, quibus non) vocabitur locus hic ampliusThopheth et vallis filii Hinnon, sed vallis interfectionis.

We saw in the last Lecture that the Prophet was sent by God's bidding to the house of the potter, that he might there take an earthen bottle, carry it to Topher, and there explain the judgment of God, which was nigh at hand on account of his worship being

violated. And he shewed why the Jews deserved reproof, even because they made incense to Baal, built groves and high places for themselves, and committed their sons and daughters to the fire: they were not only profane towards God, but also cruel towards innocent souls. Now, lest they pretended an excuse, he also added, that such a thing never came to God's mind; and this is worthy of notice, because God by this one expression fulminates against all those inventions with which men delight themselves. As then there is no command, it follows that whatever is thus attempted is frivolous and useless.

He now denounces punishment, The days are coming, or shall come, in which this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter. This seemed incredible to the Jews; for they had chosen that place for themselves to perform their superstitions: they thought therefore that a great part of their safety depended on their false worship.

As to the word Tophet, some think that it is to be taken simply for hell, or for eternal death; but this cannot by any means be admitted. More probable is their opinion who derive it from {תף}, teph, which means a drum; for they think that they did beat drums when infants were killed, that their cries might not be heard. But as this is only a conjecture, I know not whether another reason may be given. Some derive the word from {יפה} iphe, which signifies to be decorous or beautiful; and this etymology has something apparently in its favor. And perhaps it ought to be so taken in Job 17:6, where the holy man complains that he was become a proverb, and that he had been {תפת} Tophet, in the presence of all. There are indeed some who explain the word there as signifying something monstrous, and thus take it in a bad sense. But it seems rather to have been put in contrast with the former clause, --- he had been a pleasant spectacle, but he was now become detestable. But they who take the word there as meaning hell, do so entirely without any reason, for that Job perished, seeing and knowing his perdition, as they say, is a forced view. I doubt not then but that he said, that he had been {תפת} Tophet; that is, an object of joy and of praise, but that he was then a sad and mournful spectacle. And it is certain that his name, {תפת}, Tophet, was given to the valley of Hinnom, because of the hilarity and joy which thence arose to the people; for they thought that God was propitious to them, when they so sedulously offered there their sacrifices, and yet they provoked his wrath. Then Tophet is to be taken in a good sense, when we regard the origin of the word. It is indeed true that in Isaiah 30:33, Tophet is to be taken for Gehenna; but it may be that the prophets had now begun so to execrate the place as to call hell indiscriminately Gehennon and Tophet; for the word Gehenna, as we have stated elsewhere, had its origin from the same place; it is indeed corrupted, but its origin is not doubtful. Now, the reason why the prophets and other faithful men called the place hell, was plainly this, --- because the devil reigned in that place, when God's worship became vitiated, and the whole of true religion was subverted; and especially, because superstition became so deeply fixed in the hearts of the people, that it could not be rooted up except by an extraordinary force and power.

However this may have been, we may conclude from this passage, as well as from other passages, that this name was given on account of the joy experienced

there, even because they thought themselves altogether happy, as God was pacified towards them. But what does Jeremiah say? This place shall be no more called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter. This seemed, as I have said, incredible to the Jews. But it however behoved the Prophet boldly to declare what was to be. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 19:7

7. And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives: and their carcases will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.

7. Et exinaniam consilium Jehudah et Jerusalem in loco hoc, et prosternam eos in gladio coram inimicis ipsorum, et in manu quaerentium animam eorum, et ponam (dabo) cadaver eorum in cibum volucri coeli (hoc est, avibus coeli, est enallage) et bestiae (hoc est, bestiis) terrae.

This amplification further exasperated the minds of the people, --- that they in vain trusted that this place would be to them a fortress. For, as we have already stated, they had persuaded themselves that it was abundantly sufficient to reconcile them with God, when they spared not their own children, and so zealously performed tlheir acts of worship. And hypocrites are commonly inflated with this presumption, for they prefer what pleases them to what pleases God; they regard not what the law bids, what God approves, but they adore their own inventions. Since then almost all the superstitious are filled with such a presumption, God here rightly declares, that he would make void their counsels [471]

It is indeed certain that there is neither wisdom nor counsel in deluded men, while they thus devise new and frivolous modes of worship, for these are sheer mummeries. But we ought to observe what Paul says in Colossians 2:23, that all the fictions which men devise for themselves have in them some appearance of wisdom; for we know that wherever our imagination may carry us, we think ourselves wise, and that whatever God prescribes becomes insipid to us. Then the Prophet concedes ``counsel,'' though improperly, to frivolous and vain inventions, but not without reason, for experience teaches us sufficiently, that men ever take great delight in their superstitions, for they wish to subject God as it were to their own will. He then says, by way of concession, that the counsels of the whole people, especially of the city Jerusalem, would be made void, which was above others the teacher of errors, while yet the doctrine of the law ought especially to have prevailed there. And it may be also that there is an allusion to that word {בקבק} bekbek, which we have before seen, and which the Prophet will repeat again, for it means to make void or empty, though some think it to be a factitious word, because the sound, bekbek, is produced while the bottle is emptied. However this may be, the allusion is still sufficiently striking.

He afterwards adds, And I will lay them prostrate by the sword before their enemies, and by the hand of those who seek their life. In this second part, the Prophet

[471] The plain meaning is, I will frustrate all your plots and projects, whereby you think to escape and to secure yourselves, and make them as vain and empty as this earthen bottle is. — Gataker.

intimates that the hatred entertained by their enemies towards the Jews would not be common. Wars are carried on sometimes in such a way, that the conquerors are satisfied with the spoils; but the Prophet intimates, that the cruelty of their enemies would be such, that they would seek the life of the whole people, and delight in slaughter; as though he had said, that they would be deadly enemies and altogether implacable. He will again repeat these words, and in the same sense.

He then adds, I will give your carcase to be meat to the birds of heaven, and to the beasts of the field [472] We have said elsewhere that it is deemed a punishment inflicted by heaven when the carcases of the dead remain unburied; for it is the last office of humanity to bury the dead. And this is a distinction which God would have to be between men and brute animals, for animals have not the honor of a burial. It has also been ever granted as a singular privilege to men to be buried, in order to set forth the hope of resurrection. When, therefore, a burial is denied, it is a proof of extreme dishonor. It has indeed often happened that the saints have been without a burial; but temporal punishment is ever turned to salvation to God's children. As to the reprobate it must be deemed a judgment from God, when he casts away their carcases, as then there is no difference between them and animals. But I have treated this subject more fully elsewhere, and I shall not proceed with it now. It follows ---

Jeremiah 19:8

8. And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof.

8. Et ponam urbem hanc in stuporem et sibilum; quisquis transibit per eam stupebit et sibilabit super omnen plugam ejus.

Jeremiah proceeds with his denunciation, and it was necessary for him to add this amplification, that he might penetrate into their hard and perverse hearts; for had he employed only a single sentence, or a common mode of speaking, in describing their calamity and the ruin of the city, they would not have been at all moved. Hence he enlarges on the subject, and advances with greater vehemence, and always speaks in the person of God, that his denunciation might have greater weight.

I will set, etc. Here is to be noticed a second reason; for it was not enough that a calamity should be denounced on the Jews, without adding this, that it was inflicted by God's hand, and that thus the punishment of their wickedness was just. Then he says, I will set this city for an astonishment; for so in this place the word {שמה} sheme ought to be rendered, inasmuch as the reason afterwards follows, astonished shall be whosoever shall pass through it [473] He adds also, for a hissing, which is rather a mark of detestation than of scorn; yet the desolation of the whole land, and also the ruin of the holy city in which God had chosen an habitation for himself, might

[472] The words are in the singular number — "The bird of heaven and the beast of the field." — Ed.

[473] Blayney gives the same meaning, — "And I will make this city an object of astonishment and of hissing." The Vulgate and the Syriac are the same; but the Septuagint and the Targum have "desolation" instead of "astonishment." The word {{שמה signifies both, as in Hebrew the same word often expresses the cause and the effect: desolation is the cause, astonishment is the effect. The primary meaning is what is given mostly by the Septuagint and very seldom the secondary. The literal rendering of the sentence is, --- ``And I will set this city for an astonishment and for a hissing.'' --- Ed.

have filled all with terror, and ought justly to have done so. Whosoever, he says, shall pass through shall be astonished, and shall hiss on account of all her stroke; [474] for it was not to be a common calamity, but one in which might be seen God's dreadful judgment. It follows ---

Jeremiah 19:9

9. And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.

9. Et pascam eos carne filiorum suorum et carne filiarum suarum, et vir carnem proximi sui comedent (hoc est, singuli comedent carnem proximi sui) in afflictione et angustia, qua angent (vel, constringent) eos hostes ipsorum, et qui quaerent animam ipsorum.

Here the Prophet goes farther --- that so atrocious would be the calamity, that even fathers and mothers would not abstain from their children, but would devour their flesh. This was indeed monstrous. It has sometimes happened that husbands, in a state of extreme despondency, have killed their wives and children, (anxious to exempt them from the lust of enemies,) or have kindled a fire in the midst of the forum, to cast their children and wives on the pile, and afterwards to die themselves; but it was more barbarous and brutal for a father to eat the flesh of his son. The Prophet then describes an unusual vengeance of God, which could not be classed among the calamities which usually happen to mankind.

We know that this was also done in the last siege of that city; for Josephus shews at large that mothers in a brutal manner slew their children, and that they so lay in wait for one another that they snatched at anything to eat. This was also an evidence of God's dreadful vengeance.

But it was no wonder that God visited in such an awful manner the sins of those who had in such various ways, and for so long a time, provoked him; for if we compare the Jews with other nations, we shall find that their impiety, and ingratitude, and perverseness, exceeded the crimes of all nations. Then justly did God inflict such a punishment, which even at this day cannot be referred to without horror. The whole indeed is to be ascribed to his judgment; for it was he who fed [475] the fathers with the flesh of their children; for as they had sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, as before stated, so it was necessary that the vengeance of God should be openly pointed out as by the finger. This was done when God imprinted marks on the bodies of children, which even the blind could not but perceive.

He adds, In the tribulation, [476] and straightness with which their enemies shall

[474] Plagam; the original word is considered to be in the plural number, and means strokes, stripes, scourges, but not plagues in the usual sense of the word — pestilences: it may be rendered smitings, or more properly, inflictions. It occurs three times in Deuteronomy 28:59, and is rendered plagues, but it ought to be smitings or inflictions; and so here, "on account of all her inflictions." — Ed.

[475] The expression, according to the Hebrew, is, "I will cause them to eat." What a punishment! Those who sacrificed their children to their idols were judicially brought to such straits as to be driven to eat their own children! God often punishes men in a way that corresponds with their sin. Through superstitious madness the Jews willingly offered their children in sacrifice to demons; and through the extreme cravings of hunger they were constrained to eat their own children! — Ed.

[476] The word is {מצוק, which means a siege, as well as tribulation or distress; and the former is the most suitable word

straiten them. We have said that those who had been long besieged, and were not able to resist, have been often reduced to the necessity to freeing their wives, or their children, or themselves, from dishonor; but to protract life in the manner here mentioned was altogether brutal. It follows ---

Jeremiah 19:10

10. Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee.

10. Et conteras lagenam in oculis virorum qui proficiscentur (vel, qui profecti fuerint) tecum.

Jeremiah summoned witnesses, that the confirmation of the prophecy might be more fully attested to the people. With regard to the history of this transaction we may add, that he was first sent to the house of the potter, from whence he procured the bottle; he then went to Tophet, and there spoke against their impious and corrupt superstitions; and at last, to seal the prophecy, he broke the bottle in the presence of the witnesses whom he had brought with him. And we have said that it was necessary thus to deal with a people, not only ignorant and stupid, but, which is worse, perverse and obstinate. There was not only importance in the sign, that they might thence learn the doom of the city and of the whole land, but it was also a solemn sealing of the prophecy; and on this account he was commanded to break the vessel, even that he might show, by a visible act, the near approach of God's vengeance, of which the Jews had no apprehension. It follows ---

Jeremiah 19:11

11. And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place to bury.

11. Et dices ad eos, Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Ita confringam populum hunc et urbem hanc, sicut quis confringit vas figuli, (hoc est, vas testaceum; vel, vas fragile, figulinum,) quod non poterit reparari amplius: et in Thopheth sepelientur; quia non erit locus ad sepeliendum (ad verbum, a non loco ad sepeliendum.)

The Prophet again confirms what he had shewn by the external symbol, and he does this by a new coremtrod from God. We know that signs are wholly useless when the word of God does not shine forth, as we see that superstitious men always practice many ceremonies, but they are only histrionic acts. But God never commanded his prophets to shew any sign without adding doctrine to it. This is what we see was done on this occasion; for Jeremiah spoke against impious superstitions, and as a celestial herald denounced punishment; he then sealed the prophecy by breaking the bottle, and a repetition of the doctrine follows again, Thus shalt thou say to them. This is not said of the Prophet's companions, the pronoun is without an antecedent, but the whole reople are the persons referred to.

Thus saith Jehovah, I will so break this people and this city. He mentions the city, in which they thought they had an impregnable fortress, because the temple of God was there. But as they had profaned the temple and polluted the city with their crimes, Jeremiah reminded them that no confidence or hope was to be placed in the city. Then he says, As one breaks a vessel which cannot be repaired, etc. Here again

here; and so it is rendered by the Targum and the early versions, except the Syriac. --- Ed

he shows that they were wholly to perish, so as no more to rise again. We indeed know that sometimes those who are most grievously afflicted retain some remnants of strength, and are at length restored to their former vigor; but the Prophet shews that the approaching calamity would be wholly irremediable. It is no objection to say, that God a. fterwards restored the people, and that the city and the temple were rebuilt, for all this was nothing to the ungodly men of that age, as their memory wholly perished. A curse and God's vengeance remained on the heads of those who thus continued obstinate in their wickedness; and hence those who returned from exile are said in Psalm 102:19, to have been a people created again, as though they rose up as new men,

``A people, who shall be created, shall praise the Lord.''

He then says, Buried shall they be, in Tophet, for there will be no place elsewhere [477] They had chosen that place at a time when they thought that they had some evidence of God's favor, and a cause for joy; but he declares that that place would be filled with dead bodies, for they would flee in great numbers into the city, which afterwards would become so full of dead bodies that no room for burial could be found except in Topher. It follows ---

Jeremiah 19:12

12. Thus will I do unto this place, saith the LORD, and to the inhabitants thereof, and even make this city as Tophet:

12. Sic faciam loco huic, dicit Jehova, et incolis ejus; et ad ponendum (et ponam) urbem hanc sicut Thopheth.

As he had said before that the valley would be the place of slaughter, that thence it might take its name, so now he declares the same as to the city; ``As then Tophet shall be the valley of slaughter, so shall Jerusalem be.'' [478] They were no doubt kindled into rage (as we shall see in the next chapter) on hearing this prophecy; but yet God purposed, however irreclaimable and refractory they were, to let them know what was approaching, and though they did not believe the words of the Prophet, God touched and even deeply wounded their consciences, so that before the event came they were miserable. For the same purpose he adds ---

Jeremiah 19:13

13. And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods.

13. Et erunt domus Hierusalem et domus regum Jehudah, sicut locus Thopheth immundae; ad omnes domos in quibus suffitum fecerunt super tecta eorum universae militiae coelorum, et libarunt libamen diis alienis.

He describes, as I have said, more at large what he had briefly expressed, for he had spoken of the city; but as the belief of that was difficult, he now enumerates

[477] This is evidently the meaning, and not that given in our version. See note in vol. 1, p. 415. — Ed.

[478] The ellipsis in the last clause is what often occurs in Hebrew; it may be supplied in our language by that, — "Thus will I do to this place, saith Jehovah, and to its inhabitants, and that to make this city like Tophet." The full sentence is, "and thus will I do to make," etc. — Ed.

particulars, as though he had said, that Jerusalem was a wide city and splendidly built, for there were there many large and elegant houses, and the royal palaces, yet he says, that all these things would not prevent God to demolish the whole city. And this deserves particular notice, for we know that Satan dazzles our eyes whenever he suggests anything that gives a hope of defense, but what God threatens we think is vain, and as it were fabulous, or at least produces no effect on us. Since then so gross an hypocrisy prevailed in the hearts of the people, the Prophet rightly tried to shake off from them whatever might deceive them.

Hence he says, The houses of Jerusalem, etc. --- these were many and splendid --- and the houses of the kings of Judah, their palaces either within or without the city shall be as the place of Tophet; that is, no house shall be exempt from slaughter, and no palace shall protect its inhabitants. They shall be unclean, he says, that is, on account of dead bodies, for men slain would be found everywhere; and this is, as it is well known, often mentioned in Scripture as a pollution or defilement. With regard to all the houses; some read, ``On account of all the houses,'' and {ל} lamed, is often a causal preposition. But it seems rather to be taken here as explanation; and hence I render the words, With regard to all the houses, so that the Prophet speaks of all the houses in, which they made incense. [479] As then there was no house free from sacrilege, he says that God's vengeance would penetrate into all houses without any exception.

He says also, On the roofs, with the view of condemning them for their effrontery; for they raised their baseness as a standard, that it might be seen at a distance. They indeed thought that God was delighted with such a service; but how came they to entertain such a foolish persuasion, except through their neglect and contempt of the law, and also through a mad presumption in giving more credit to their own fictions than to certain truth. The Prophet then justly condemns them, for they had cast off all shame, and went up to the roofs of their houses, that their doings might be more open. Then he mentions the whole host of heaven; and says further, that they had poured a libation to foreign gods. We see that many kinds of superstitions prevailed among the people; for he spoke of Baal in the singular number, he mentioned also Baalim, patrons, and he now adds, the whole host of heaven; that is, the sun, the moon, and all the stars.

We hence see that the Jews kept no limits as to their sacrileges, which is usually the case with all the ungodly; for as soon as men begin to turn aside from the pure and genuine worship of God, they sink into the lowest depths. It is then this wantonness that the Prophet now refers to, when he intimates that their various forms of worship were so increased, that they had devised as many gods as there are stars in heaven; which is similar to what is said elsewhere,

``According to the number of thy cities, O Judah, are thy gods,''
(Jeremiah 2:28; Jeremiah 11:13.)

[479] On account of all the houses," is the Septuagint and the Targum; "all the houses," is the Vulgate and the Syriac, being put in apposition with "the houses of Jerusalem," etc. The words which follow are literally, — "which they have burned incense on their roofs," which we properly render in our language, "on whose roofs they have burned incense;" but the Welsh is literally the Hebrew, Y rhai yr arogldarthasant ar eu pennau, — "which they incensed on their roofs;" but "incensed" in this sense is not used. — Ed.

Jeremiah 19:14-15

14. Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, whether the LORD had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the LORD'S house; and said to all the people,

14. Et venit (reversus est) Jeremias e Thopheth, quo miserat eum Jehova ad prophetandum; et stetit in atrio domus Jehovae, et dixit ad totum populum,

15. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words.

15. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Ecce ego adduco super urbem hanc et super omnes urbes ejus omne malum quod loquutus sum super eam, quia obduraverunt cervicem suam, ut non audirent sermones meos.

Jeremiah had been led to the very place, when he foretold the punishment, which was nigh at hand, on account of the superstitions of Tophet or of the valley of Hinnom. That his doctrine might be more efficacious, God intended that he should preach before the very altar and in the very valley, then well known for ungodly and false modes of worship. He says now that he went to the Temple and delivered there the same message. We hence learn how great must have been the stupidity and indifference of the people, for the repetition of the prophecy was not unnecessary. For as God knew that the Jews were extremely tardy and slow, he caused them to be warned twice by his servant, and in two different places.

Jeremiah, it is said, returned from Tophet, where God had sent him to prophesy; which last words were added, that we may not suppose that he without reason preached in the valley of Hinnom. God then commanded Jeremiah to denounce there, as it were in the very place, on the Jews their own destruction. And he stood, it is added, in the court of Jehovah's house. As it was not lawful for the people to enter into the Temple, they usually assembled in the court, which was a part of the Temple. Then Jeremiah stood there; for he had to speak, not to a few, or in a corner, but to the whole people, and to make them witnesses of his prophecy. But we read here nothing new; for, as it has been stated, he was bidden to declare twice the same thing --- the approaching calamity; and he was so bidden, because the Jews were so hardened, that they could not easily be moved. That he connects other cities with Jerusalem is not to be wondered at; he thereby intimates, that the whole land was guilty before God, and that therefore desolation was near at hand, as to all the towns and cities; as though he had said, ``God will not spare Jerusalem, though it has been hitherto his sanctuary; but as lesser cities are not innocent, they shall also feel the hand of God together with Jerusalem.''

The reason is subjoined, Because they have hardened their neck. He again confirms what we have before observed, --- that they had fallen, not through ignorance, but through perverseness; for they had learned with sufficient clearness from the law what was right, and they had also been often warned by the prophets. Hence then their wickedness appeared and their untameable spirit, for they had heard the sound doctrine of the law, and had many to warn them.

Now this passage teaches us that there is no pardon left for us, when we, as it were, avowedly reject the yoke of God. And this ought to be carefully noticed, for

we see how difficult it is to subdue men, even when they confess that the word of God is what they hear. Since then there is in all mankind an innate perverseness, that hardly one in a hundred allows himself to be ruled by God's word, it behoves us seriously to consider what is here said, --- that they are unworthy of mercy who harden their neck. Hence it is said in Psalm 95:8,

``Harden not your hearts like your fathers.''

And a clearer definition follows, That they might not hear my words. Though there be hardness in all mortals, yet when the doctrine of salvation is made known and not received, then a greater impiety and pride shew themselves; for in that case, men hear God speaking, and yet rob him of his authority. It then follows, that the more clearly God makes known his truth, the less ground of excuse there is; for then especially comes to light the impiety of men, and their disdain seems incapable of being subdued.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast been pleased to prescribe a rule for us, by which we may truly and purely worship thee, --- O grant, that we may follow this plain rule, and never indulge our own imaginations, nor trifle with thee through our own fancies or through the foolish wisdom of our flesh, but continue in thy law, and in the doctrine which thine only-begotten Son, our Lord, has delivered to us, so that we may advance more and more in the knowledge of that glory, the foretaste of which thou givest us now, until we shall at length fully and perfectly enjoy it, when we shall be gathered into that celestial kingdom, which thy Son has procured for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Historical Translation of Jeremiah

Translation: Chapter 1

CHAPTER 1

1 The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin:

2 Even the word of Jehovah came to him in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, The king of Judah, in the tenth year of his reign;

3 And it came in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, to the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, to the transmigration of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

4 And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, ---

5 Before I formed thee in the womb, I knew thee; Before thou camest forth from the womb, I sanctified thee; A prophet to the nations have I made thee.

6 And I said, --- Ah! Lord Jehovah, Behold, I know not how to speak, for I am a child.

7 And Jehovah said to me, --- Say not, I am a child; For wheresoever I send thee, thou shalt go; And whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt say:

8 Fear not their face, for I am with thee, To deliver thee, saith Jehovah.

9 And Jehovah extended his hand and touched my mouth; and Jehovah said to me, --- Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth;

10 See, I have set thee today Over nations and over kingdoms, To pull down and to destroy, To root up and to demolish, To build and to plant. (**1:47**)

11 Then the word of Jehovah came to me saying, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, The rod of a watcher is what I see.

12 Then Jehovah said to me, Thou hast rightly seen, for I watch over my word to do it.

13 And the word of Jehovah came to me again, saying, What seest thou? And I said, A pot boiling is what I see; its face is towards the north.

14 And Jehovah said to me, --- From the north shall break forth an evil On all the

inhabitants of the land:

15 For behold, I am calling all the families Of the kingdoms of the north, saith Jehovah; And they shall come, and set shall each his throne, At the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, And on all its walls around, And on all the cities of Judah:

16 And I will execute my judgments on them For all their wickedness; Because they have forsaken me, And have burnt incense to strange gods, And bowed down to the works of their own hands. (**1:58**)

17 Thou then, gird thy loins and arise, And speak to them whatsoever I command thee; Fear not their face, Lest I dismay thee before them.

18 And I, behold I have made thee this day A fortified city, an iron pillar, And a brazen wall, as to the whole land, Against the kings of Judah, Against his princes, against his priests, Against the people of the land:

19 And they shall fight with thee, But shall not prevail over thee, For with thee am I, saith Jehovah, to deliver thee.

Translation: Chapter 2

CHAPTER 2

1 And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, ---

2 Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, Saying, Thus saith Jehovah, --- I remember thee for my kindness to thine youth And my love at thy espousal, When thou didst follow me in the desert, In a land not sown. (**1:70**)

3 Holiness was Israel to Jehovah, The first-fruits of his increase: Whosoever devour him shall be punished, Evil shall come upon them, saith Jehovah.

4 Hear the word of Jehovah, ye house of Jacob, And all the families of the house of Israel:

5 Thus saith Jehovah, --- What iniquity did your fathers find in me? For they alienated themselves from me, And walked after vanity, and became vain; (**1:75**)

6 And they said not, ``Where is Jehovah, Who brought us out of the land of Egypt, And led us through the wilderness, In a land waste and rugged, In a land horrible and deadly, In a land through which none passed, And in which no man dwelt?'' (**1:79**)

7 And I brought you into a fertile land, To eat its fruit and its abundance; But ye entered and polluted my land, And my heritage have ye made an abomination:

8 The priests said not, ``Where is Jehovah?'' And they who handled the law, knew not me; And the pastors dealt treacherously with me, And the prophets prophesied by Baal, And after things which did not profit, they walked.

9 Therefore still will I contend with you, saith Jehovah; And with your children's children will I contend.

10 For pass over to the isles of Chittim, and see; And to Kedar send, and consider diligently; And see whether such a thing as this has been done ---

11 Has a nation changed its gods, Though they are no gods? Yet my people have changed their glory Unto that which does not profit.

12 Be astonished, ye heavens, at this, and terrified, Be ye wholly desolated, saith Jehovah: (**1:92**)

13 Surely, two evils have my people done, --- Me have they forsaken, the fountain of living waters, And dug have they for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns, which hold no waters!

14 Is Israel a servant? Is he one born in the house? Why is he become a prey?

15 Over him roar the lions, They have raised their voice; They have made his land waste; His cities are burnt up, Without an inhabitant.

16 Even the children of Noph and Thaphanes Do break thy crown.

17 Hast thou not done this for thyself, By forsaking Jehovah thy God, While he was leading thee in the way?

18 And now what hast thou to do in the way to Egypt, That thou mightest drink the waters of the Nile? And what hast thou to do in the way to Assyria, That thou mightest drink of the water of the river?

19 Chastise thee shall thine own wickedness, And thy apostasies, they shall punish thee; And thou shalt understand and know, That it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee To have forsaken Jehovah thy God, And that my fear has not been in thee, Saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts.

20 For of old have I broken thy yoke, Have I burst thy bands; But thou hast said, ``I will not serve;'' For on every high hill and under every shady tree Hast thou rambled like a harlot. (**1:107**)

21 I indeed planted thee a choice vine, Altogether a good seed; How then art thou turned to me A degenerated foreign vine!

22 Even though thou washest thyself with nitre, And multipliest to thee the herb of the fuller; Yet imprinted is thine iniquity Before my face, saith the Lord Jehovah.

23 How canst thou say, ``I am not polluted, After Baalim have I not gone?'' See thy ways in the valley, Know what thou hast done, --- Thou swift dromedary, traversing her ways, ---

24 A wild she-ass, used to the desert, In her own lust snuffing up the wind she meets with: Who can thence bring her back? Whosoever seeks her, needs not weary himself; In her month will he find her. (**1:118**)

25 Keep thy foot from being unshod, And thy throat from thirst: Yet thou hast said, ``It is all over, No, for I have loved strangers, And after them will I go.''

26 As there is shame to a thief when caught, So ashamed shall be the house of Israel, Their kings and their princes, Their priests and their prophets, ---

27 Who say to the wood, ``My father art thou;'' And to the stone, ``Thou hast begotten me:'' For they have turned to me the back, not the face; But in the time of their calamity they say, ``Arise and save us.''

28 But where are thy gods, Which thou hast made for thyself? Let them arise, if they can save thee In the time of thy calamity; For according to the number of thy cities Have been thy gods, O Judah!

29 Why do ye contend with me? Ye have all dealt perfidiously with me, saith Jehovah.

30 In vain have I chastised your children; Correction they received not; Devoured has the sword your prophets, As a destroying lion.

31 O generation! see ye the word of Jehovah; Have I been a desert to Israel, or a

land of darkness? Wherefore have my people said, --- ``We have ruled, we will come no more to thee.'' (**1:135**)

32 Can a maid forget her ornaments, A spouse her attire? But my people have forgotten me, Days without number.

33 Why trimmest thou thy ways to seek love? Thou hast even thus taught wickedness by thy ways.

34 Even in thy skirts is found The blood of the souls of the poor innocents; Not in digging under have they been found, But on account of all these things: (**1:143**)

35 Yet thou hast said, ``Surely I am clean; Only let his fury depart from me.'' Behold I will contend with thee in judgment, Because thou hast said, ``I have not sinned.''

36 Why ramblest thou so much to change thy ways? Even of Egypt shalt thou be ashamed, As thou hast been ashamed of Assyria.

37 Even now for this thou shalt go forth, And thine hands on thine head; For abhorred hath Jehovah thy confidences, And in them thou shalt not prosper. (**1:151**)

Translation: Chapter 3

CHAPTER 3

1 It is said, when a man puts away his wife, And she goes from him to another man, Shall he return to her again? Would not the land be thus greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many friends; Yet return to me, saith Jehovah.

2 Raise thine eyes to the high places, And see where thou hast played the harlot: By the ways thou didst sit for them, As the Arabian in the desert; And polluted hast thou the land With thy whoredoms and thy wickedness.

3 Restrained therefore have been the showers, And the late rain has not been; Yet the front of a strumpet has been thine, Thou hast refused to be ashamed.

4 Wilt thou not hereafter cry to me, --- ``My Father, the guide of my youth art thou?

5 Will he keep wrath for ever? Will he reserve it perpetually?'' Behold, thou hast spoken, And hast done evils with all thy might. (**1:162**)

6 And Jehovah said to me in the days of Josiah the king, --- Hast thou seen what the apostate Israel has done? She went on every high mountain And under every shady tree, And played there the harlot:

7 And I said, after she had done all these things, ``Return to me;`` but she returned not; And see this did her perfidious sister Judah.

8 And I saw, that when for all these things, Because rebellious Israel had played the harlot, I had dismissed her and given her a bill of divorce, Yet fear did not her perfidious sister Judah, But went and played also the harlot. (**1:166**)

9 And it happened through the levity of her whoredom, That she polluted the land, And played the harlot with stone and with wood.

10 And yet after all this, returned to me Has not her perfidious sister Judah, With her whole heart, but feignedly, saith Jehovah.

11 And Jehovah said to me, --- Justified herself has apostate Israel Rather than perfidious Judah:

12 Go and publish these words towards the north, And say, Return, rebellious Israel, saith Jehovah; I will not let fall my wrath upon you, For I am merciful, saith Jehovah; I will not keep it for ever:

13 But know thine iniquity, That against Jehovah thy God thou hast acted wickedly, And prostituted thy ways to strangers Under every shady tree; (**1:176**) And to my voice thou didst not hearken, saith Jehovah.

14 Return, ye rebellious children, saith Jehovah; For I am your husband; And I will take you, one from a city, And two from a family, and bring you to Sion;

15 And will give you pastors according to my heart, And they shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

16 And it shall be, when ye shall multiply and increase In the land, in those days, saith Jehovah, That they will no more say, --- ``The ark of the covenant of Jehovah;'' And it shall not come to mind, And they shall not remember nor visit it; Even this shall not be done any more. (**1:185**)

17 At that time they shall call Jerusalem, The throne of Jehovah; And assemble to it shall all nations, For the name of Jehovah, even to Jerusalem; And walk shall they no more After the evil hardness of their own hearts. (**1:186**)

18 In those days shall come The house of Judah with the house of Israel; Together shall they come from the land of the north, To the land which I have given For an inheritance to your fathers.

19 But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, And give thee the desirable land, The heritage coveted by hosts of nations? And I said, ``My Father,'' shalt thou call me, And from me thou wilt not depart. (**1:189**)

20 Surely as a woman deals perfidiously with her partner, So hast thou dealt perfidiously with me, O house of Israel, saith Jehovah.

21 A voice on high places was heard, The weeping of the prayers of the children of Israel; Because they had perverted their way, And forgotten Jehovah their God. (**1:192**)

22 ``Return, ye rebellious children, I will heal your transgressions.'' ``Behold we come to thee, For thou art Jehovah our God:

23 Surely deceit is from the hills, From the multitude of mountains; Surely, in Jehovah our God Is the salvation of Israel. (**1:194**)

24 Even shame hath devoured the labor Of our fathers, from our youth, Even their sheep and their cattle, Their sons and their daughters.

25 We have lain down in our shame, And our reproach hath covered us, Because with Jehovah our God We have dealt wickedly, we and our fathers, From our childhood even to this day, (**1:196**) And have not attended to the voice of Jehovah our God.''

Translation: Chapter 4

CHAPTER 4

1 If thou wilt return, Israel, saith Jehovah, Return to me; Even if thou wilt take away Thine abominations from my sight, And wilt not wander: (**1:199**)

2 And thou shalt swear, ``Live does Jehovah, In truth, in judgment, and in righteousness;'' Then bless themselves in him shall nations, And in him shall they glory. (**1:202**)

3 For thus saith Jehovah To the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, --- Plough again the first ploughing, And sow not among thorns:

4 Be ye circumcised to Jehovah, And take away the foreskin of your heart, Ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; Lest my fury go forth like fire, And burn that none may quench it; On account of the evil of your doings.

5 Proclaim ye in Judah, And publish in Jerusalem, and say, ``Sound the trumpet in the land;'' Call, assemble, yea, say, --- ``Be assembled, and let us enter into fortified cities;''

6 Raise the standard in Sion; Flee, stay not, for an evil do I bring From the north, even a great ruin. (**1:208**)

7 Ascended has the lion from his thicket, And the waster of nations is gone forth; He is come forth from his place, To make thy land a waste; Thy cities shall be destroyed, So as to be without an inhabitant.

8 For this gird yourselves with sackcloth, Lament and howl; for turned away from us Is not the fury of Jehovah's wrath.

9 And it shall be in that day, saith Jehovah, That perish shall the heart of the king, And the heart of the princes; And amazed shall be the priests, And the prophets shall be astonished. (**1:212**)

10 Then I said, Ah! Lord Jehovah! Surely, deceiving thou hast deceived This people and Jerusalem, by saying, ``Peace shall be to you;'' Yet reached has the sword to the soul. (**1:214**)

11 At that time it shall be said To this people and to Jerusalem, --- A dry wind from the heights of the desert Shall be towards the way of the daughter of my people, Not to fan nor to cleanse;

12 A wind stronger than this shall come for me; Now also will I pronounce judgments on them. (**1:217**)

13 Behold as clouds shall he ascend, And as a whirlwind his chariots; Swifter than eagles his horses: Woe to us! for we are lost.

14 Cleanse from evil the heart, Jerusalem; That thou mayest be saved: How long will remain within thee The thoughts of vanity! (**1:221**)

15 For a voice proclaims from Dan And publishes ruin from Mount Ephraim.

16 Rehearse it to the nations; Behold, publish against Jerusalem, --- Besiegers come from a remote land, And raise over the cities of Judah their voice;

17 As keepers of the field they shall be over her around; Because she hath provoked me, saith Jehovah.

18 Thy way and thy doings have done this for thee; This is thy wickedness, though it be bitter, Though it reaches to thy heart. (**1:227**)

19 My bowels! my bowels! I am in pain; The walls of my heart! My heart is in a tumult within me; I will not be silent, for the sound of the trumpet Has my soul heard, And the clamor of war has it heard. (**1:229**)

20 Calamity on calamity is cried; For destroyed is the whole land; Suddenly destroyed are my tents, In an instant my curtains.

21 How long shall I see the standard --- Shall I hear the sound of the trumpet?

22 Because foolish are my people, Me have they not known; Sottish children are they, And they are not intelligent; Acute are they for evil, But how to do good they know not.

23 I beheld the land, and lo, it was waste and without form; And the heavens, and they had no light:

24 I beheld the mountains, and lo, they trembled; And all the hills were shaking:

25 I beheld, and lo, there was no man, And every bird of the heavens was fled:

26 I beheld, and lo, Carmel was a desert; And all its cities were destroyed, At the presence of Jehovah, At the presence of the burning of his wrath.

27 For thus saith Jehovah, Laid waste shall be the whole land; But an end will I not make.

28 For this mourn shall the land, And black shall become the heavens above; For I have spoken, I have purposed, And will not repent nor be turned from this.

29 At the voice of the horseman and of the bowmen, Flee shall the whole city; They shall penetrate into thick clouds, They shall ascend into rocks; Every city shall be forsaken, And no man shall dwell in them. (**1:245**)

30 And thou, wretched one, what wilt thou do? Though thou puttest on crimson, Though thou deckest thyself with ornaments of gold, Though thou adornest with paint thine eyes, In vain wilt thou decorate thyself; Hate thee will thy lovers, Thy life will they seek.

31 Surely, the voice of one in travail have I heard, The distress as of one giving birth to a first-begotten, The voice of the daughter of Sion; Who mourns, who spreads

her hands, --- ``Wo to me now! for fainted has my soul On account of murderers.'' (**1:251**)

Translation: Chapter 5

CHAPTER 5

1 Go round through the streets of Jerusalem, And see, I pray, and know, Inquire also in its cross-ways, Whether ye shall find a man, Whether there be any, who doeth judgment, Who seeketh the truth, And I will spare it. (**1:252**)

2 Though they say, ``Live does Jehovah;'' Yet in this they swear falsely.

3 Jehovah! are not thine eyes on the truth? Thou hast smitten them, But they have not grieved; Thou hast consumed them, But they have not received correction: They have made their faces harder than a rock, They have refused to return.

4 But I said, Surely the poor are these; They have acted foolishly, Because they knew not the way of Jehovah, The judgment of their God:

5 I will go to the great and speak to them, For they know the way of Jehovah, The judgment of their God: But these have altogether broken the yoke, They have burst the bonds.

6 Therefore smite them shall the lion from the forest, The wolf of the desert shall spoil them, The leopard shall watch over their cities; Whosoever goeth out shall be torn: For manifold are their transgressions, Increased are their defections.

7 How for this shall I spare thee? Thy children have forsaken me, And have sworn by one that is not a god; When I fully satisfied them, they committed adultery, And at the house of the harlot they assembled:

8 Fed horses! rising early in the morning, Every one at his neighbor's wife neigheth.

9 Should I not for these things visit? saith Jehovah, And on such a nation as this Shall not my soul be avenged?

10 Ascend her walls and demolish, But an end make not; Take away her foundations, For they are not Jehovah's:

11 For by transgressing they have transgressed against me, The house of Israel and the house of Judah saith Jehovah.

12 They have denied Jehovah and said, ``He is not, and come on us shall no evil; Yea, the sword and the famine we shall not see:

13 And the prophets shall be wind, For the word is not in them: Thus shall it be done to them.''

14 Therefore, thus saith Jehovah, the God of hosts, --- Because you have uttered this word, Behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, And this people wood, And it shall devour them:

15 Behold I will bring on you a nation from far, O house of Israel, saith Jehovah, A strong nation, an ancient nation, A nation whose language thou knowest not, And understandest not what it says: (**1:286**)

16 Their quiver is like an open sepulcher, All of them are valiant;

17 And they will devour thy harvest and thy bread; They will devour thy sons and thy daughters, They will devour thy flocks and thy herds, They will devour thy vine and thy fig-tree; To want shall they reduce thy fortified cities, To which thou trustest, by the sword:

18 But even in those days, saith Jehovah, I will not make with you an end.

19 And it shall be, when ye say, ``Why hath Jehovah our God done to us All these things?'' that thou wilt say to them, --- As ye have forsaken me, And served foreign gods in your land, So shall ye serve foreigners in a land not your own.

20 Declare this in the house of Jacob, And publish it in Judah, saying, ---

21 Hear this, I pray, Ye foolish people and void of heart, Who have eyes and see not, Who have ears and hear not:

22 Will ye not fear me? saith Jehovah; Will ye not at my presence tremble? Who have set the sand a bound to the sea, By a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it; Though its waves rage, yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it.

23 But this people hath a perverse and rebellious heart; They have turned aside and departed:

24 And they have not said in their heart, --- Let us now fear Jehovah our God, Who giveth rain, both the early And the latter shower in its season, Who keeps to us the appointed weeks of harvest.

25 Your iniquities have prevented these things, And your sins have restrained good from you.

26 For found among my people are the wicked; They look, as though they would set snares; A trap they set, in which they catch men. (**1:303**)

27 As a cage is full of birds So their houses are full of fraud: Therefore they are increased and become rich;

28 They are become fat, they shine; They even surpass the deeds of the wicked: The cause they judge not, The cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; And the judgment of the poor they judge not. (**1:306**)

29 Shall I not for this visit, saith Jehovah? On such a nation as this Shall not my soul be avenged?

30 A monstrosity and baseness is in the land!

31 The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule by their means; (**1:309**)

And my people wish it to be so: But what will ye do at the end of it?

Translation: Chapter 6

CHAPTER 6

1 Be assembled, ye children of Benjamin, From the midst of Jerusalem, And in Tekoa sound the trumpet; In Beth-haccerem also set up a sign; For evil is seen from the north, And great distress.

2 To a quiet and delicate woman Have I likened the daughter of Sion:

3 To her shall come shepherds and their flocks; They shall pitch their tents near her around, Feed shall each in his own place.

4 Prepare ye war against her: ``Arise ye, and let us ascend at mid-day; Alas for us! for declined has the day, For extended are the evening shadows:

5 Arise, and let us ascend in the night, And let us demolish her palaces.'' (**1:319**)

6 For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Cut ye down wood, And form against. Jerusalem a mound; It is a city of visitation, Entire oppression is in the midst of her:

7 As a fountain casts out its waters, So she casts out her wickedness; Violence and plunder is heard of in her; Before me continually is grief and smiting.

8 Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, Lest my soul be torn from thee, Lest I make thee a desert, A land not inhabited.

9 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- By gleaning they shall glean, as a vine, The remnant of Israel: Turn back thine hand, As a grape-gatherer into the baskets. (**1:326**)

10 To whom shall I speak and protest, That they may hear? Behold, uncircumcised is their ear, And they cannot hear; Behold, the word of Jehovah is to them a reproach; They delight not in it.

11 Of Jehovah's indignation therefore am I full, I am wearied with refraining To pour it on the children in the streets, And on the assembly of young men also; For the husband with his wife shall be taken, The aged with the full of days:

12 And turned shall be their houses to aliens, Their fields and their wives in like manner; For I will stretch out my hand On the inhabitants of the land, saith Jehovah:

13 For from the least to the greatest of them, Every one is given to covetousness;

And from the prophet to the priest, Every one acts deceitfully;

14 And healed have they the wound Of the daughter of my people slightly By saying, ``Peace, peace,'' when there was no peace. (**1:336**)

15 Were they ashamed, that they had done abomination? Even of shame they were not ashamed, And how to blush they knew not: Fall therefore shall they among the fallen; At the time of their visitation They shall perish, saith Jehovah. (**1:339**)

16 Thus said Jehovah, --- Stand in the ways and see, Inquire also concerning the old paths, Which is the right way, and walk ye in it, That ye may find rest to your soul: And they said, ``We will not walk in it.''

17 I also set over them watchmen, That they might, attend to the sound of the trumpet; But they said, ``We will not attend.''

18 Hear therefore, ye nations, And know, thou assembly, what shall be to them:

19 Hear, thou land; behold I bring an evil On this people, the fruit of their thoughts; Because to my words they have not hearkened, And my law have they despised.

20 To what purpose is this to me? Incense cometh from Sheba, And the sweet came from a far country; Your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, And your sacrifices are not pleasant to me.

21 Therefore thus saith Jehovah, --- Behold, I lay before this people stumbling-blocks; And stumble shall fathers and sons alike; Neighbor and friend, they shall perish.

22 Thus saith Jehovah, --- Behold, a people shall corns from the north country, And a great nation shall be roused From the sides of the earth:

23 On the bow and spear shall they lay hold; They are cruel and will not spare; Their voice, like the sea, will roar, And on horses shall they mount; Arrayed shall they be as men for war, Against thee, O daughter of Sion.

24 We have heard its fame; Relaxed are our hands, Anguish has laid hold on us, The pain as of one in travail.

25 Go not forth into the field, Nor walk by the way; For the sword of the enemy Is a terror on every side.

26 Daughter of my people! gird on sackcloth, And roll thyself in the dust; Make thee mourning, as for an only son, Most bitter lamentation; For suddenly shall come on thee the spoiler.

27 A tower have I made thee to my people, --- A fortress; that thou mightest know And try their ways:

28 All are entire apostates, Walking in detraction; Brass and iron are they; All of them are corrupters. (**1:358**)

29 Burnt are the bellows by the fire, Entire is the lead, In vain has melted the melter; For the wicked have not been refined:

30 Reprobate silver shall they call them, Because rejected them has Jehovah (**1:360**)

Translation: Chapter 7

CHAPTER 7

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, ---

2 Stand in the gate of the house of Jehovah, And proclaim there this word, and say, --- Hear the word of Jehovah, all ye Judah, Who enter through these gates to worship Jehovah:

3 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, --- Make good your ways and your doings, And I will dwell with you in this place:

4 Trust not in words of falsehood, by saying, ``The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, The temple of Jehovah, are these buildings.'' (**1:364**)

5 Surely, if by making good ye make good Your ways and your doings, If by doing ye do judgment Between man and his neighbor,

6 If the stranger, the orphan and the widow, Ye oppress not, and innocent blood Ye shed not in this place, And after strange gods Ye walk not to your hurt, ---

7 Then will I cause you to dwell in this places In the land which I gave to your fathers, For ever and ever.

8 Behold, ye trust in words of falsehood, Which are without profit.

9 Will ye steal, kill, and commit adultery, Swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, And walk after alien gods, Whom ye do not know;

10 And come and stand before me in this house, Which is called by my name, and say, ``We have been made free To do all these abominations?'' (**1:373**)

11 Is this house, called by my name, Become a den of robbers in your eyes? Even I, behold I see, saith Jehovah.

12 But go now to my place in Shilo, Where I made to dwell my name at first, And see what I did there, For the wickedness of my people Israel:

13 And now, because ye have done All these works, saith Jehovah, And I spoke to you, rising early, And when I spoke, ye heard not, When I called you, ye answered not;

14 I will therefore do to this place, Which is called by my name, In which ye trust --- Even to the place which I gave to you And to your fathers, as I did to Shilo;

15 And I will cast you out from my presence, As I have cast out all your brethren, The whole seed of Ephraim.

16 And thou, pray not for this people, And raise not for them a cry and a prayer, And intercede not with me; For I will not hear thee. (**1:384**)

17 Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah And in the streets of Jerusalem?

18 Children gather wood, And fathers kindle a fire, And women knead a dough, To make cakes for the queen of heaven; And they pour libations to alien gods, That they may provoke me to wrath! (**1:387**)

19 Do they provoke me to wrath, saith Jehovah? Is it not to the shame of their own faces?

20 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, --- Behold my wrath, even my fury, It shall be poured on this place, Upon men and upon beast, Upon the tree of the field and the fruit of the land; And it shall burn, and none shall quench it.

21 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, --- Your burnt-offerings add to your sacrifices, And eat ye the flesh:

22 For I spoke not to your fathers, Nor commanded them in the day, In which I brought them out of the land of Egypt, Concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices;

23 But this is what I commanded them, saying, --- ``Hear my voice, And I will be to you a God, And you shall be to me a people; And walk ye in all the ways Which I have commanded you. That it may be well with you:

24 Yet they heard not, nor inclined their car; But walked in perverse counsels, In the wickedness of their own evil heart, And went backward and not forward.

25 From the day in which your fathers came out From the land of Egypt, to this day, Have I sent to you all my servants, the prophets, Every day rising early and sending them:

26 Yet they heard not nor inclined their ear, But hardened their neck; They have acted more perversely than their fathers.

27 Thou also shalt say to them all these words, But they will not hear thee; And thou shalt call to them, But they will not answer thee:

28 Therefore say to them, --- This is a nation, Which have not hearkened to the voice Of Jehovah, their God, And have not received correction: Perished has the truth, And cut off has it been from their mouth.

29 Shave off thy hair and cast it away, Raise on the heights a lamentation; Nor rejected thee has Jehovah; And forsaken hath he the generation of his wrath:

30 For the children of Judah have done evil Before mine eyes, saith Jehovah; They have set their abominations in the house, On which my name is called, to pollute it;

31 And they have built the high places of Tophet, Which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, To burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; Which I have not commanded, Nor has it ever come into my heart.

32 Therefore, behold the days come, saith Jehovah, That it shall no more be called Tophet, And The valley of the son of Hinnom, But, The valley of slaughter; And they

shall bury in Tophet, For elsewhere there will be no place:

33 And the carcasses of this people shall be for meat To the birds of heaven and to the beasts of the earth; And there will be none to frighten them:

34 And to cease will I make, from the cities of Judah And from the streets of Jerusalem, The voice of joy and the voice of gladness, The voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride; For to a waste shall the land be reduced.

Translation: Chapter 8

CHAPTER 8

1 In that day, saith Jehovah, they shall bring forth The bones of the kings of Judah, And the bones of his princes, And the bones of the priests, And the bones of the prophets, And the bones of the citizens of Jerusalem, Out of their graves;

2 And they shall spread them before the sun, And the moon, and all the host of heaven, Which they have loved and served, And after which they have walked, And which they have sought, And before which they have bowed themselves; They shall not be gathered nor buried; For dung on the face of the land shall they be:

3 And chosen shall be death, Rather than life, by all the residue, Who shall remain of this wicked nation, Who shall remain in all the places Where I shall drive them, saith Jehovah of hosts.

4 Thou shalt also say to them, Thus saith Jehovah, --- Shall not they who have fallen rise again? If any one turns aside shall he not return?

5 Why rebel does this people at Jerusalem With a perpetual rebellion? They have held fast deceit, They have refused to return.

6 I hearkened and heard; they will not speak aright; There is no one who repents of his wickedness, And says, ``What have I done?'' Every one turns to his own course, Like a horse who rushes into battle. (**1:425**)

7 Even the stork in the heavens knows its times; The turtle also, and the swallow and the crane, Observe the time of their journey; But my people know not the judgment of Jehovah.

8 How say ye, ``We are wise And the law of Jehovah is with us:'' Surely, behold in vain Hath the writer prepared his pen, In vain are the scribes!

9 Ashamed are the wise, terrified and taken; Behold the word of Jehovah have they rejected; And wisdom, what is it to them! (**1:432**)

10 I will therefore give their wives to aliens, And their fields to inheritors; For from the least even to the greatest, Every one is given to covetousness; From the prophet

even to the priest, All have acted deceitfully;

11 And healed have they the wound Of the daughter of my people slightly, By saying, ``Peace, peace,'' when there was no peace.

12 Had they shame, that they had done abomination? Even of shame they were not ashamed, And how to blush they knew not: Fall therefore shall they with the fallen; At the time of their visitation They shall perish, saith Jehovah.

13 Destroying, I will destroy them, saith Jehovah; No grapes shall be on the vine, And no figs on the fig-tree; The leaf also shall fall, And what I gave them shall pass from them.

14 Why do we sit still? Assemble ye, And let us enter into fortified cities, And let us rest there: Surely, Jehovah our God hath made us silent, And given us waters of gall to drink: Because we have sinned against Jehovah. (**1:442**)

15 We looked for peace, but there was no good; For time of healing, but behold terror.

16 From Dan is heard the snorting of his horses; At the sound of the neighing of his strong ones, Tremble does the whole land; For they will come and devour The land and its abundance, The city and its inhabitants.

17 For behold, I will send among you Serpents and basilisks, Which will not be charmed; And they shall bite you, saith Jehovah.

18 I would strengthen myself against grief: But within me my heart is weak.

19 Behold the voice of the crying Of the daughter of my people from a far country! ``Is not Jehovah in Sion? Is not her king within her?'' --- Why have they provoked me to wrath With their images, with foreign vanities?

20 Past has the harvest, ended is the summer, And we have not been saved! (**1:452**)

21 For the hurt of the daughter of my people I am hurt, I am become black; Astonishment has laid hold on me.

22 Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? For why is not restored The healing of the daughter of my people! (**1:456**)

Translation: Chapter 9

CHAPTER 9

1 Who will make my head waters And mine eye a fountain of tears! Then would I bewail, day and night, The slain of the daughter of my people.

2 Who will set me in the desert, In the lodging of travelers! Then would I leave my people And depart from them: For all of them are adulterers, An assembly of perfidious men.

3 And they shoot lies with their tongue as with a bow; But not for truth are they strong in the land; For from evil to evil they proceed; (**1:462**) And me they know not, saith Jehovah.

4 And every one of his friend take ye heed, And in a brother trust ye not; For every brother by supplanting will supplant, And every friend walks fraudulently:

5 And a man deceives his neighbor, And the truth he speaks not; They have taught their tongues to speak falsehood; With doing evil they weary themselves.

6 Thou dwellest in the midst of deceit; Through deceit they refuse To know me, saith Jehovah. (**1:469**)

7 Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Behold, I will try them, and will prove them; For how should I deal With the daughter of my people?

8 A sharpened arrow is their tongue, Falsehood it speaks; His mouth speaks peace to his neighbor, But within he sets up intrigues.

9 For this shall I not visit, saith Jehovah, On such a nation as this Shall not my soul be avenged?

10 For the mountains will I raise up weeping and wailing, For the pastures of the wilderness, lamentation; Because they are laid waste, So that there is not a man passing through, And they hear not the voice of cattle; From the bird of heaven to the beast. Have they fled, have they departed. (**1:475**)

11 I will also make Jerusalem heaps, A place for dragons; And the cities of Judah will I make a waste, So that there shall be no inhabitant.

12 Who is a wise man to understand this? And to whom has Jehovah's mouth spoken, That he may declare why the land is to perish --- Is to be laid waste like the desert, So that no man should pass through? (**1:480**)

13 Then Jehovah said, --- Because they have forsaken my law, Which I have set before them, And hearkened not to my voice, Nor walked according to it;

14 But walked after the imaginations Of their own hearts, and after Baalim, As their fathers taught them;

15 Therefore, thus saith Jehovah of hosts, The God of Israel, --- Behold, I will feed this people with bitterness, And will give them the water of gall to drink;

16 I will also scatter them among the nations, Whom they have not known nor their fathers, And I will send after them the sword, Until I shall have consumed them.

17 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Attend ye and call for the mourning women, That they may come, And send for those who are skillful, That they may come.

18 And let them hasten and make a wailing for us, That our eyes may let fall tears, And our eyelids drop down waters. (**1:489**)

19 For a voice of wailing is heard from Sion, ``How we are wasted! How greatly shamed! Because we have left the land, They have cast down our dwellings.''

20 Therefore hear, ye women, the word of Jehovah, And let your ears receive the word of his mouth, And teach your daughters wailing, And each one her friend lamentation:

21 For come up is death to our windows, It has entered into our palaces, To cut off the infirm from the street, The young men in the broad places. (**1:493**)

22 Speak, thus saith Jehovah, fall shall the carcasses of men As dung on the face of the field, And as the handful after the reaper, And none gathering it.

23 Thus saith Jehovah, --- Let not the wise glory in his wisdom, And let not the brave glory in his courage, Let not the rich glory in his riches;

24 But in this let him glory who glorieth, In understanding, and in knowing me, That I am Jehovah, who doeth mercy, Judgment and righteousness in the land; For in these things I delight, saith Jehovah. (**1:502**)

25 Behold the days are coming, saith Jehovah, That I will visit every one circumcised, Who is in uncircumcision, ---

26 Egypt and Judah and Edom, The sons of Ammon and Moab, And all those who are in extreme recesses, Who dwell in the wilderness; For all these nations are uncircumcised, And the whole house of Israel, They are uncircumcised in heart.

Translation: Chapter 10

CHAPTER 10

1 Hear ye the word which Jehovah speaks to you, O house of Israel:

2 Thus saith Jehovah, --- The way of the Gentiles learn not, And of the signs of heaven be not afraid, For fear them do the Gentiles:

3 Because the rites of the heathens are vanity, For a tree from the forest does one cut --- The work of the craftsman's hands by the ax;

4 With silver and gold they beautify it, With nails and hammer they make it fast, That it should not move;

5 As a palm, erect, but they speak not; And being raised, they are raised, for they cannot walk: Fear them not, for they cannot do evil, And to do good is not in their power. (2:14)

6 From no time has been found any Like thee, Jehovah; great art thou, And great is thy name in power.

7 Who should not fear thee, king of nations? For to thee this belongs; For among all the wise of the nations, And in all their kingdoms, From no time has there been one like thee. (2:28)

8 Even in this one thing they are foolish and fatuitous --- The teaching of vanities the wood is:

9 Silver, extended, is from Tarshish brought, And gold from Ophas, --- The work of the artificer and of the melter's hands; Hyacinth and purple are their garments, The work of the wise, all of them.

10 But Jehovah is God, the truth, God, the life and the king of ages: Through his fury tremble will the earth, And the nations will not bear his wrath.

11 Thus shall ye say to them, --- The gods who made not the heaven and the earth, Let them perish from the earth and from under heaven:

12 He who made the earth by his power, Who set in order the world by his wisdom, And by his understanding extended the heavens, ---

13 At his voice there is abundance of waters in the heavens, And he makes vapors to ascend from the extremity of the earth; Lightnings he makes for rain, And brings the wind from his treasures. (2:31)

14 Foolish is every man through his knowledge, Ashamed is every maker of the graven image, For a falsehood is the molten image, And there is no breath in them.

15 Vanity they are, the work of illusions; At the time of their visitation they shall perish.

16 But not like them is the portion of Jacob, For the Creator of all things is he, And Israel is the rod of his inheritance; Jehovah of hosts is his name.

17 Gather from the land thy treasures Thou who dwellest in a fortress:

18 For thus saith Jehovah, --- Behold! will cast out as with a sling The inhabitants of the land at this time, And I will straiten them, That they may find what they deserve.

19 Woe is me on account of my bruising! Full of pain is the smiting given to me! and I said, --- Surely it is my stroke, and I will bear it:

20 My tent is pulled down, And all my cords are broken; My sons are gone from me, and there are none --- No one to extend any more my tent, And to set up my curtains!

21 For infatuated are the pastors, And Jehovah have they not sought; Therefore have they not prospered, And all that was in their pastures has been destroyed.

22 A sound of rumor! lo, it comes, And a great tumult, from the land of the north, To make the cities of Judah a waste, The habitation of dragons!

23 I know Jehovah, That his way is not in the power of man, That it is not in man who walketh to guide his steps.

24 Chastise me, Jehovah, but only in moderation; Not in thy wrath, lest thou shouldest consume me:

25 Pour thy wrath on the nations, who know thee not, And on the families who have not called on thy name; For they have devoured Jacob, Yea, they have devoured and consumed him, And his tents have they laid waste.

Translation: Chapter 11

CHAPTER 11

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, ---

2 Hear ye the words of this covenant; and say ye to the men

3 of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and thou shalt say to them, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, --- Cursed

4 Is the man who hears not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers in the day in which I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, --- Hear ye my voice, and do according to all those things which I have commanded you; and ye shall be to me a people and I will

5 Be to you a God; that I may confirm the oath which I swear to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, according to what it is at this day. And I answered and said, Amen, Jehovah.

6 And Jehovah said to me, Proclaim these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, --- Hear the words of this covenant and do them;

7 For protesting I protested to your fathers, In the day in which I brought them Out of the land of Egypt, to this day, Rising up early and protesting, and saying, ---

8 ``Hear ye my voice:'' Yet they heard not, nor inclined their ear, But walked, every one of them, After the wickedness of his own evil heart: I have therefore brought on them All the words of this covenant, Which I commanded them to do, But they did them not. (2:84)

9 And Jehovah said to me, --- Found out is a conspiracy, Among the men of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem:

10 Returned are they to the iniquities of their forefathers, Who refused to hear my words, But walked after foreign gods to serve them: Broken have the house of Israel and the house of Judah My covenant, which I made with their fathers.

11 Therefore thus saith Jehovah, --- Behold, I will bring upon you an evil, From which ye shall not be able to escape; And they shall cry to me, but I will not hear

them:

12 And go shall the cities of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem, And cry to the gods to whom they have offered incense; But by saving they will not save them In the time of their affliction:

13 For according to the number of thy cities Have been thy gods, O Judah; And according to the number of streets of Jerusalem, Have ye set up altars for reproach --- Altars to offer incense to Baal. (2:94)

14 And thou, pray not for this people, And raise not for them a cry and a prayer; For I will not hear them at the time When they shall cry to me for their distress.

15 What has my beloved to do in mine house, While she commits abomination with many? And the flesh of the sanctuary is taken from thee; For when thou didst evil, thou didst then glory. (2:102)

16 A green olive, fair in fruit and form, Hath Jehovah called thy name; At the noise of great tumult hath he kindled a fire on it, And broken down are its branches: (2:105)

17 For Jehovah of hosts who planted thee Hath spoken against thee an evil, For the wickedness of the house of Israel And of the house of Judah, Which they have done for themselves, To provoke me by offering incense to Baal.

18 Jehovah hath made me to know, and I knew it; Thou didst then discover to me their works.

19 But I was like a lamb or an ox Led to be slain; and I knew not That they meditated thoughts against me: ``Let us spoil with wood his bread, And cut him off from the land of the living; And let his name be remembered no more.'' (2:113)

20 Now, Jehovah of hosts, who judgest righteously, Who searchest the reins and the heart, Let me see thy vengeance on them, For to thee have I revealed my cause.

21 Therefore thus saith Jehovah To the men of Anathoth, who seek thy life and say, ``Prophesy thou not in the name of Jehovah, That thou mayest not die by our hand;''

22 Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Behold, I will visit them; Their young men shall die by the sword, Their sons and their daughters shall die by famine,

23 And there shall be no remnant of them; For I will bring evil on the men of Anathoth, In the year of their visitation.

Translation: Chapter 12

CHAPTER 12

1 Just art thou, Jehovah, though I contend with thee; Yet of judgments will I speak to thee: How long shall the way of the ungodly prosper? Secure are all they who by transgressing transgress. (2:121)

2 Thou hast planted them, they have even taken root; They have grown, they have even produced fruit: Nigh art thou in their mouth, But far from their reins.

3 But thou, Jehovah, knowest me, Thou seest me and hast tried my heart towards thee; Draw them forth as sheep for the slaughter, And prepare them for the day of destruction.

4 How long shall mourn the land, And the grass of every field wither For the wickedness of those who dwell in it? Consumed are the beasts and the birds, Because they have said, ``He shall not see our end.'' (2:129)

5 If with footmen thou hast run, And they have wearied thee, How canst thou contend with horsemen? In the land of peace thou hast trusted, How then canst thou do in the rising of Jordan?

6 Truly, even thy brethren and the house of thy father, Even these act perfidiously towards thee; Yea, they cry after thee with a loud voice: Trust them not, even when they speak good things to thee.

7 I have forsaken my house, I have left my heritage; I have given up the darling of my soul Into the hand of her enemies!

8 My heritage has become to me like a lion in the forest; It has sent forth its voice against me; Therefore have I hated it.

9 Is my heritage to me a speckled bird? Is there not a bird around over it? Come, gather yourselves all ye beasts of the field; Come to devour it. (2:140)

10 Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard, They have trodden under foot my portion, They have made nay choice portion a desolate wilderness;

11 They have made it a desolation, It mourns to me, being desolate; Desolate is

become the whole land; Though no one hath laid it to heart.

12 On all high places in the wilderness have come destroyers; For the sword of Jehovah hath devoured, From one end to the other end of the land; There is no peace to any flesh.

13 They have sown wheat And thorns have they reaped; An heritage have they got, but have not succeeded: Ashamed have they been of your produce, Through the burning of the wrath of Jehovah. (2:149)

14 Thus saith Jehovah, --- As to all my evil neighbors, Who touch my heritage, Which I have inherited, even my people Israel, Behold, I will pluck them up from their land, And the house of Judah Will I pluck up from the midst of them.

15 And it shall be, after I draw them out, That I shall return and shew mercy to them, And will restore them, every one to his heritage, And every one to his own land.

16 And it shall be, that if by learning they will learn The ways of my people, To swear by my name, ``Live does Jehovah,'' As they taught my people to swear by Baal, They shall then be built up In the midst of my people:

17 But if they will not hear, I will then pluck up that nation, Plucking it up and destroying it, saith Jehovah.

Translation: Chapter 13

CHAPTER 13

1 Thus saith Jehovah to me, --- Go and get thee a linen belt, and put it on thy loins, and

2 In water set it not. So I got for me a belt, as Jehovah had

3 commanded, and put it on my loins. Then came the word of

4 Jehovah to me again, saying, --- Take the belt which thou hast got, which is on thy loins, and rise, go to Euphrates and hide

5 It there in the hole of a rock. Then I went and hid it by

6 Euphrates, as Jehovah had ordered me. And it was, that at the end of many days, Jehovah said to me, Rise and go to Euphrates, and take thence the belt which I commanded thee

7 To hide there. So I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the belt from the place where I had hid it; and behold the belt

8 Was marred, and it was good for nothing. Then came the word of Jehovah to me, saying, ---

9 Thus saith Jehovah, --- In this way will I mar the excellency of Judah And the great excellency of Jerusalem:

10 This wicked people, who refuse to hear my words, Who walk in the wickedness of their own heart, And walk after foreign gods, That they may serve them and worship them, --- Shall be even as this belt, Which is good for nothing.

11 For as the belt cleaves to the loins of man, So had I joined to me the whole house of Israel And the whole house of Judah, saith Jehovah, That they might be to me a people and a name, Yea, a praise and a glory; But they hearkened not.

12 Thou shalt also say this word to them, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, --- Every bottle shall be filled with wine. When they shall say to thee, Knowing do we not know, that every

13 Bottle shall be filled with wine? then shalt thou say to them, --- Thus saith

Jehovah, --- Behold, I will fill with drunkenness All the inhabitants of this land, And all the kings who sit for David on his throne, The priests also and the prophets, And all the inhabitants of Jerusalem;

14 And I will dash them, every one against his brother, The fathers also and the sons together, saith Jehovah: I will not spare, nor will I be propitious, Nor shew pity until I destroy them.

15 Hear ye and attend, be not lifted up, For Jehovah hath spoken:

16 Give to Jehovah your God the glory, Before he makes it to grow dark, And before your feet stumble at the dark mountains, And before he turns the light ye hope for Into the shadow of death, And makes it thick darkness. (2:179)

17 But if ye will not hear this, In secret will my soul mourn for pride, And weeping my eye will weep And run down with tears; For led captive is the flock of Jehovah.

18 Say to the king and to the queen, Be ye humbled, lie ye down, For come down from your heads Shall the crown of your glory.

19 The cities of the south are closed up, And there is no one to open them; For carried away has been all Judah, He has been carried away completely. (2:185)

20 Raise ye your eyes, And behold them who come from the north: Where is the flock, which has been given to thee, The sheep of thy glory?

21 What wilt thou say when he visits thee? But thou hast taught them to be leaders over thy head; Shall not sorrows lay hold on thee, As on a woman in travail?

22 But if thou wilt say in thine heart, ``Why have these evils happened to me?'' For the multitude of thine iniquity Are thy skirts discovered, And naked are made thy heels.

23 Can the Ethiop change his skin, And the panther his spots? Even so can ye do good, Who have been taught evil. (2:192)

24 I will therefore scatter them like the stubble, That passeth away by the wind of the desert.

25 This thy lot is the portion of thy measures From me, saith Jehovah, For thou hast forgotten me, And thou hast trusted in falsehood;

26 And I also will uncover thy skirts on thy face, That seen may be thy shame.

27 Thy adulteries and thy neighings, The thought of thy whoredom, On the mountains, in the field, have I seen, Even thine abominations; Woe to thee, Jerusalem! Wilt thou not at length be made clean? How long yet!

Translation: Chapter 14

CHAPTER 14

1 The word which came to Jeremiah respecting the drought:

2 Mourned has Judah, And his gates have been weakened; They are become black on the ground, And the cry of Jerusalem has gone up: (2:205)

3 And their chiefs sent the common people to the waters; They came to the cisterns, they found no water; They returned with empty vessels; They were confounded and ashamed, And they covered their head:

4 For the chapt ground, as there was no rain in the land, Ashamed were the husbandmen, And they covered their head:

5 Moreover the hind brought forth young in the field, And forsook it, for there was no grass:

6 And the wild asses stood on the cliffs, They drew in wind like serpents; Fail did their eyes, for there was no grass. (2:209)

7 Though our iniquities testify against us, O Jehovah, Deal with us for thine own name's sake; For multiplied have our defections, Against thee have we done wickedly,

8 Hope of Israel! Savior art thou In the time of trouble; Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land? As a traveler, turning aside to pass the night?

9 Why shouldest thou be as a man terrified? As a strong man, who yet cannot save? Thou art in the midst of us, O Jehovah, And on us is thy name called, Forsake us not. (2:214)

10 Thus saith Jehovah of this people: As they have loved to wander, And have not restrained their feet, Therefore Jehovah has not been pleased with them; He will now remember their iniquities, And visit their sins.

11 Jehovah said also to me: Pray not for this people for their good:

12 When they fast I will not hear their cry; And when they offer a sacrifice and an oblation, I will not be pleased with them; For with the sword and with famine, And

with pestilence, will I consume them.

13 And I said, Ah! Lord Jehovah, Behold, the prophets say to them, --- ``Ye shall not see the sword, And famine shall not be to you, Nay, sure peace will I give you in this place.''

14 Then said Jehovah to me, --- Falsehood do the prophets prophesy in my name; I have not sent them nor commanded them, Nor have I spoken to them; A false vision and divination, Yea, vanity and the deceit of their own heart, Do they of themselves prophesy to you. (2:226)

15 Therefore, thus saith Jehovah, of the prophets who prophesy in my name, and I have not sent them, and who say, The sword and the famine shall not be in this land, --- By the sword and

16 Famine shall these prophets be consumed; and the people, to whom they have prophesied, shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem through the famine and the sword, and there will be none to bury them, --- they, their wives: and their sons, and their daughters; and I will pour upon them their own wickedness.

17 Therefore shalt thou say to them this word, --- Run down shall mine eyes with tears Day and night, and they shall not rest, For with a great breach is broken down The virgin, the daughter of my people; The stroke is very grievous:

18 If I go out to the field, behold the slain with the sword! And if I enter the city, behold the sorrowful with famine! For both the prophet, and the priest, Go round through the land, and know not what to do.

19 Repudiating hast thou repudiated Judah? Has thy soul abominated Sion? Why hast thou so smitten us, that we have no healing? We have looked for peace, and there is no good, And for time of healing, and behold terror!

20 We know, O Jehovah, our wickedness, And the iniquity of our fathers; For we have done wickedly against thee.

21 Reject not, for thy name's sake, Overthrow not the throne of thy glory; Remember. render not void, Thy covenant with us. (2:240)

22 Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles, Who can cause it to rain? And can they give rain from heaven? Art not thou thyself, Jehovah, our God? And we have looked to thee, For thou hast done all these things.

Translation: Chapter 15

CHAPTER 15 [480]

1 Then Jehovah said to me: Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, My soul would not be towards this people; Send them from my presence, and let them depart.

2 And it shall be, if they say to thee, ``Whither shall we go forth?'' Then shalt thou say to them, --- Thus saith Jehovah, --- They who are for death, to death, And they who are for the sword, to the sword, And they who are for the famine, to the famine, And they who are for captivity, to captivity:

3 And I will set over them four kinds, saith Jehovah, --- The sword to kill, and the dogs to drag, And the bird of heaven, and the beast of the earth, To devour and to destroy:

4 And I will set them a vexation, To all the kingdoms of the earth, For Manasse, the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, On account of what he did in Jerusalem.

5 For who will pity thee, O Jerusalem? And who will condole with thee? And who will turn aside To inquire of thy welfare?

6 Thou hast forsaken me, saith Jehovah; Backward hast thou gone; I will therefore stretch my hand against thee, And I will destroy thee; I am wearied with repenting:

7 And I will fan them with a fan Through all the gates of the earth; I have bereaved, I destroyed my people; From their own ways they have not returned.

8 Multiplied have their widows to me Above the sand of the sea; I brought to them, on the troop of youths, A waster at mid-day; And I cast on them suddenly A tumult and terrors.

9 Weakened did she become who had born seven, Expire did her soul, Go down did her sun while it was yet day, Confounded has she been and ashamed: And the remainder of them to the sword will I give, Before their enemies, saith Jehovah. (2:266)

[480] The beginning of this chapter is evidently connected with the end of the last, and ought not to have been separated. — Ed.

10 Wo to me, my mother! That thou hast born me a man of strife, And a man of contention to the whole land: I have not lent on usury, And they have not on usury lent to me; Yet every one curses me.

11 And Jehovah said, --- Surely thy latter end shall be well; Surely I will cause to meet thee the enemy, In the time of evil and in the time of distress. (2:273)

12 Shall iron break The iron from the north and the steel!

13 Thy wealth and thy treasures To plunder will I give, Not in exchange, but for all thy wickedness, And for all thy counsels:

14 And I will make thee to pass to the enemy Into a land which thou knowest not; For a fire is kindled in my wrath, On you it shall burn.

15 Thou knowest, O Jehovah, Remember me and visit me, And avenge me on my persecutors, Lest thou shouldest take me away By protracting thy wrath: Know that for thee have I borne reproach. (2:280)

16 Found were thy words, and I did eat them; And thy word was my joy and the gladness of my heart; For called on me was thy name, O Jehovah, the God of hosts.

17 I sat not in the assembly of mockers, Nor exulted on account of thy hand; I sat apart, for with indignation Hast thou filled me.

18 Why is my pain strong, and my stroke incurable, And refuses to be healed? Wilt thou be to me As the deception of unfaithful waters?

19 Therefore, thus saith Jehovah, --- If thou wilt be turned, then I will turn thee, That thou mayest stand before me; And if thou separatest the precious from the worthless, As my mouth shalt thou be: Let them turn to thee, but turn not thou to them.

20 I have even made thee to this people A wall of brass, fortified; They shall therefore fight against thee, But over thee they shall not prevail; For with thee am I to save thee, And to deliver thee, saith Jehovah:

21 Yea, I will save thee from the hand of the wicked, And deliver thee from the hand of the strong. (2:300)

Translation: Chapter 16

CHAPTER 16

1 Then came the word of Jehovah to me, saying, ---

2 Take not to thee a wife, And have no sons and daughters in this place:

3 For thus saith Jehovah, --- As to the sons and daughters, born in this place, And as to the mothers who shall bear them, And as to the fathers, who shall beget them in this land ---

4 With deaths of sicknesses shall they die, They shall not be lamented nor buried; As dung on the face of the earth shall they be; With the sword also and the famine shall they be consumed, And their carcasses shall be for meat To the birds of heaven, and to the beasts of the earth. (2:305)

5 For thus saith Jehovah, --- Enter not the house of mourning Nor go to lament, nor be moved for them; For I have taken away my peace From this people, saith Jehovah, My kindness also and mercies:

6 And die shall they, great and small, in this land; They shall not be buried, Nor shall any lament for them nor cut themselves, Nor shall baldness be made for them;

7 And they shall not for them smite the hand, To console them for the dead; Nor shall they drink to them the cup of consolations, For their father or for their mother. (2:310)

8 The house of feasting also enter not, To sit with them to eat and to drink;

9 For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, --- Behold, I will take away from this place Before your eyes and in your days, The voice of joy and the voice of gladness, The voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.

10 And it shall be, when thou declarest to this people All these words, that they will say to thee, --- ``Why has Jehovah spoken against us All this great evil? And what is our iniquity? and what is our sin? Which we have wickedly done against Jehovah, our God.''

11 Then thou shalt say to them, --- Because your fathers forsook me, saith Jeho-

vah: For they went after foreign gods, And served them and bowed down to them, And me they forsook, and my law they did not keep;

12 And worse are ye become than your fathers; For, behold, ye have walked, every one of you, After the wickedness of his own evil heart, So as not to hearken to me.

13 I will therefore cast you out of this land, Into a land which ye have not known, nor your fathers, And there shall ye serve foreign gods, day and night; For I will shew you no favor.

14 Therefore, behold, the days will come, saith Jehovah, When it shall be no more said, Live does Jehovah, Who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt:

15 But, Live does Jehovah, who has brought up The children of Israel, from the land of the north, And from all the lands to which he had driven them; For I will restore them to the land Which I gave to their fathers.

16 Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith Jehovah; And they shall fish them; And afterwards I will send for many hunters, And they shall hunt them from every mountain, And from every hill and holes of rocks:

17 For mine eyes are on all their ways; They are not hid from my face, Nor are their iniquities hid from mine eyes:

18 And I will render double, from the beginning, For their iniquities and their sins; For they have polluted my land With the carcasses of their abominations; And with their defilements Have they filled mine inheritance. (2:325)

19 O Jehovah, my strength and my fortress, And my refuge in the day of distress, To thee shall come the Gentiles From the extremities of the earth, and shall say, --- ``Surely falsehood did our fathers inherit; Vanity and nothing profitable had they.''

20 Can men make gods for themselves, When they themselves are no gods? (2:333)

21 Therefore, behold, I will make them to know at this time, I will make them to know My hand and my power; And they shall know that my name is Jehovah.

Translation: Chapter 17

CHAPTER 17

1 The sin of Judah is written With a pen of iron, with the point of adamant, It is graven on the tablet of their hearts, And on the horns of your altars:

2 For their children remember Their altars and their groves, Under the shady tree, on high hills.

3 Dweller on mountains! in the field will I give for spoil Thy wealth and all thy treasures, Because of thy high places, Because of thy sin in all thy borders:

4 And dismissed shalt thou be, even thyself, From thine inheritance which I gave thee; And I will make thee to serve thine enemies In a land which thou knowest not; For ye have kindled a fire in my wrath, Perpetually shall it burn. (2:342)

5 Thus saith Jehovah, --- Cursed is the man who trusts in man, And makes flesh his arm, And whose heart turns away from Jehovah:

6 And he shall be like a tamarisk in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, And shall dwell in dryness in the desert, In the land of salt and not inhabited.

7 Blessed is the man who trusts in Jehovah, And whose hope Jehovah is:

8 And he shall be like a tree, That is planted near waters, And nigh the stream sends its roots, And shall not see when heat comes; And green shall be its leaf, And in the year of drought it shall not fear, Nor cease from bringing forth fruit. (2:347)

9 Insidious is the heart above all things, And vicious, --- who can know it?

10 I Jehovah, who search the heart And try the reins, to give to every one, According to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings. (2:354)

11 A partridge, which gathers and produces not, Is he who gains riches, and not by right; In the midst of his days he leaves them, And at his end he is nothing.

12 A high throne of glory, from the beginning, Is the place of our sanctuary.

13 The hope of Israel art thou, Jehovah; All who thee forsake shall be ashamed: They who turn aside shall on the earth be written; For they have forsaken The fountain of living waters, even Jehovah.

14 Heal me, O Jehovah, And I shall be healed; Save me, and I shall be saved, For my praise art thou.

15 Behold they say to me, --- ``Where is the word of Jehovah? let it now come.''

16 But I hastened not to be a pastor following thee, And the day of grief I desired not, thou knowest: What went forth from my lips, Before thy face has it been.

17 Be not to me a terror; My protector art thou in the day of evil.

18 Ashamed let them be who persecute me, And let not me be ashamed; Terrified let them be, And let not me be terrified: Bring upon them the day of evil, And with a double breach break them.

19 Thus said Jehovah to me, --- Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, through which the kings of Judah enter, and through which they go

20 out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem; and say to them, --- Hear the words of Jehovah, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter in through these

21 gates, Thus saith Jehovah, --- Take heed to yourselves, And bring not a burden on the Sabbath-day, Yea, bring it not through the gates of Jerusalem;

22 Nor bring a burden from your houses On the Sabbath-day, nor do any work, But sanctify the Sabbath-day, As I commanded your fathers;

23 Though they heard not nor inclined their ear, But hardened their neck, So as not to hear nor receive correction:

24 And it shall be, if by hearing Ye will hear me, saith Jehovah, So as not to bring a burden Through the gates of the city on the Sabbath-day, And if ye sanctify the Sabbath-day By doing on it no work;

25 Then shall enter through the gates of this city Kings and princes, sitting on David's throne, Riding in chariots and on horses, They and their princes, the men of Judah And the inhabitants of Jerusalem, And inhabited shall be this city perpetually:

26 And come shall they from the cities of Judah, And from the circuits of Jerusalem, And from the land of Benjamin, And from the plain, and the mountain, and the south, Bringing burnt-offering and sacrifice, And oblation and incense, And bringing praise, to the house of Jehovah. (2:388)

27 But if ye will not hearken to me, So as to sanctify the Sabbath-day, And not to bring a burden, nor enter Through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day; Then will I kindle a fire in its gates, And it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, And it shall not be extinguished.

Translation: Chapter 18

CHAPTER 18

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, ---

2 Rise and go down to the potter's house, and I will cause thee to hear my words.

3 And I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he was making a work on the stone:

4 And the vessel was marred, which he made of the clay in the hand of the potter; and he again made another vessel, as it seemed good in the eyes of the potter to make.

5 And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, ---

6 Cannot I as this potter do to you, O house of Israel? saith Jehovah. Behold, as the clay is in the hand of the potter, So are ye in my hand, O house of Israel.

7 Suddenly will I speak of a nation and a kingdom, To pull down and to eradicate and to destroy:

8 If that nation turn from its evil, For which I spoke against it; Then will I repent of the evil Which I had thought of doing to it.

9 Suddenly also will I speak of a nation and a kingdom, To build up and to plant:

10 But if it do evil before mine eyes, So as not to hearken to my voice; Then will I repent of the good Which I had said that I would do to it. (2:398)

11 And now, I pray, say to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, --- Thus saith Jehovah, --- Behold, I frame for you an evil, And I think for you a thought; Return ye then, every one from his evil way, And make right your ways and your doings.

12 And they said, --- It is all over; For after our own thoughts will we walk, And we will do, every one, The wickedness of his own evil heart.

13 Therefore thus saith Jehovah, --- Ask, I pray, among the heathens, Who hath heard such a thing? A monstrous thing hath the virgin of Israel done.

14 Will any one leave the snow of Libanus from the rock of the field? Will waters

brought from another place, And cold streams, be relinquished? (2:408)

15 For forgotten me have my people; In vain do they offer incense, Since they have made them to stumble In their ways --- the paths of ages, That they might walk in paths, In a way not trodden;

16 To make their land a desolation, A perpetual hissing: Whosoever shall pass through it Shall be astonished and shake his head.

17 By the east wind will I scatter them Before the face of the enemy; The back and not the face will I shew them In the day of their calamity.

18 And they said, --- Come, and let us think thoughts against Jeremiah; For perish shall not the law from the priest, Nor counsel from the wise, Nor the word from the prophet: And let us smite him with the tongue, And not attend to any of his words.

19 Hearken, O Jehovah, to me, And hear the voice of those who contend with me.

20 Shall evil be rendered for good? For they have digged a pit for my soul: Remember that I stood before thee To speak good for them --- To turn away from them thy wrath.

21 Therefore give their children up to famine, And deliver them into the hands of the sword, And let their wives be bereaved and be widows, And their men be smitten to death, And their youths be smitten with the sword in battle:

22 Let a cry be heard from their houses, When thou bringest on them an army suddenly; For they have dug a pit to take me, And snares have they hid for my feet.

23 And thou, Jehovah, who knowest their counsels To be against me for death, Be not propitious to their iniquity, And their sin from thy sight blot not out, But let them stumble before thee; In the time of thy wrath deal thus with them.

Translation: Chapter 19

CHAPTER 19

1 Thus saith Jehovah, --- Go and get a potter's vessel, even with the elders of the people and with the elders of the priests;

2 And enter into the valley of Hinnom, which is at the entrance of the oriental gate, and proclaim there the words which I shall speak to thee:

3 And thou shalt say, Hear the word of Jehovah, ye kings of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, --- Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, --- Behold I bring an evil on this place, The which whosoever hears, tingle shall his ears:

4 Because they have forsaken me, And have alienated this place, And have made incense in it to foreign gods, Whom they have not themselves known, Nor their fathers, nor the kings of Judah, And have filled this place With the blood of innocents:

5 And they have built high places to Baal, To burn their sons with fire, For a burnt-offering to Baal; Which I have not commanded nor spoken of, And which came not into my mind.

6 Therefore behold the days shall come, saith Jehovah, When this place shall no more be called Tophet, Nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, But, The valley of slaughter:

7 And void will I make the counsel of Judah And of Jerusalem in this place, And lay them prostrate by the sword before their enemies, And by the hand of those who seek their life; And I will give their carcasses for meat To the birds of heaven and to the beasts of the earth;

8 And will set this city For an astonishment and for hissing; Whosoever shall pass through it shall be astonished, And shall hiss on account of all her stroke:

9 And I will feed them with the flesh of their sons, And with the flesh of their daughters; And they shall eat, every one the flesh of his friend, In the tribulation and straitness, By which their enemies shall straiten them, And those who seek their life.

10 Then shalt thou break the bottle in the presence of the men who shall go with

thee;

11 And thou shalt say to them, --- Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- So will I break this people and this city, As one breaks an earthen vessel, Which can no more be repaired: And in Tophet shall they be buried, For there will be no other place to bury them:

12 Thus will I do to this place, Saith Jehovah, and to its inhabitants, I will even make this city like Tophet;

13 For the houses of Jerusalem, And the houses of the kings of Judah, Shall be, like the place of Tophet, unclean, Even all the houses, on whose roofs They have made incense to all the host of heaven, And poured a libation to foreign gods.

14 Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, where Jehovah had sent him to prophesy, and stood in the court of the house of Jehovah, and said to the whole people, ---

15 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, --- Behold, I will bring upon this city And upon all her towns, all the evil Which I have pronounced against her; Because they have hardened their neck, That they might not hear my words.

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Hebrew Words and Phrases

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Latin Words and Phrases

- Christus ubique totus est, sed non totum: 1
- Haec ergo evenient illis: 1
- Ne ego to perterrefaciam coram illis: 1
- Non ignora mali, miseris succurrere disco: 1
- Penit ei insidias: 1
- Proedicam illis decreta mea: 1
- Quinn vilis factus es nimis, iterans vias tuas: 1
- Verum: 1
- Verumtamen: 1
- ab ista: 1
- ad ignominiam: 1
- aversio: 1
- cera: 1
- cervix: 1
- circuite: 1
- cogitatio: 1
- converte: 1
- cum dolo: 1
- cum ignominia: 1
- desperavi, nequaquam faciam: 1
- dulia: 1
- eruditionem: 1
- et praeterierunt sermones meos pessime: 1
- ex hoc: 1
- exoestuat: 1
- fides: 1
- fiduciam tibi praebentibus: 1

- filiusfamilias: 1
- fortis: 1
- fraudulenter: 1
- illinc: 1
- illusione: 1
- in jocos: 1
- in pravurn: 1
- invitabo: 1
- latria: 1
- lege perpetua: 1
- medicus: 1
- murenulas: 1
- nempeeven: 1
- nugis: 1
- placentas: 1
- praeceptum sempiternum: 1
- praetorium castrense: 1
- praevaricatrix: 1
- pravitas: 1
- pravity: 1
- propagines: 1
- puer: 1
- refrigerium: 1
- requiem: 1
- robustam: 1
- serotina: 1
- sponsa: 1
- sylvas: 1
- usus loquendi: 1 2
- ut filia: 1
- velut: 1
- venient: 1
- vexillum: 1
- voca: 1
- vocabo: 1
- vocate: 1
- vulgo dieitur: 1
- Cum faber incertus scanmum faceretne Priapm, Maluit esse Demu: 1
- Est aliquid quo tendis et in quod dirigis arcum: 1
- Y rhai yr arogldarthasant ar eu pennau: 1
- ad Vitalem: 1
- altitudinem: 1
- carnes sanctae: 1
- cingulum: 1

- conjuratio: 1
- delitice: 1
- dolium: 1
- domina: 1
- dominatrix: 1
- imbecillis: 1
- juxta: 1
- laguncula: 1
- lumbare: 1
- majores: 1
- mansuetus: 1
- minores: 1
- morticinis: 1
- pacem firmam: 1
- pardus: 1
- parentalia: 1
- perticas: 1
- proficiunt: 1
- sudarium: 1
- suscitem: 1
- vagus: 1
- videam: 1