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COMMENTARY

**COMMENTARY
ON THE PROPHET
HABAKKUK**

by John Calvin

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

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

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

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

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

"The style of HABAKKUK," Says Bishop *Lowth*, "is poetical, especially in his Ode, which may justly be deemed one of the most complete of its kind."^{fla} And in *describing* the character of this ode he says — "The Prophet indeed embellishes the whole of this poem with a magnificence equal to its commencement, selecting from so great an abundance of wonderful events the grandest, and setting them forth in the most splendid dress, by images and figures, and the most elevated diction; the high

sublimity of which he augments and *enhances* by the *elegance* of a *remarkable conclusion*: so that hardly any thing of this kind would be more beautiful or more perfect than this poem, were it not for one or two spots of obscurity which are to be found in it, occasioned, as it seems, by its ancientness.”^{f1b}

ZEPHANIAH was in part contemporary with JEREMIAH, that is, during the former portion of the reign of JOSIAH. He foretells the FALL OF NINEVEH, (<360213> Zephaniah 2:13,) and mentions “the remnant of Baal,” (<360104> Zephaniah 1:4,) two things which prove that he prophesied during the former half of that king’s reign; for NINEVEH was destroyed about the sixteenth year of his reign, and it was after that time that the worship of Baal was demolished by that king.

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

The style of ZEPHANIAH has been represented as being in some parts prosaic; and *Lowth* says that “he seems to possess nothing remarkable or superior in the arrangement of his matter or in the elegance of his diction.”^{f1c} But it is *Henderson’s* opinion that “*many* of the censures that have been passed on his language are either without foundation or much exaggerated.” He appears to be as poetic in his ideas as most of the Prophets, and in the manner in which he arranges them, though he deals not much in parallelisms, which constitute a prominent feature in Hebrew poetry.

The matters handled by the Prophet are said by *Marckius* to be “most worthy of God, whether we regard His serious reproofs or His severe threatenings, or His kind warnings, or His gracious promises, which especially appertain to the dispensation of the New Testament. In all these particulars he not only agrees with the other prophets, but also adopts their expressions.”^{f1d} He then gives the following examples: —

<360106> **Zephaniah 1:6** compared with <241506> Jeremiah 15:6.

<360115> **Zephaniah 1:15** compared with <290201> Joel 2:1, 2.

<360118> **Zephaniah 1:18** compared with <260719> Ezekiel 7:19, and <240427> Jeremiah 4:27.

<360208> **Zephaniah 2:8, 9** compared with <244802> Jeremiah 48:2, and <262501> Ezekiel 25:1.

<360303> **Zephaniah 3:3, 4** compared with <262226> Ezekiel 22:26, 27, 28, etc.

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

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

What Lowth says of this Prophet's style, that "*it is altogether prosaic,*" is not strictly true; for there are some parts highly poetical. See <370106> Haggai 1:6, and from 8 to 11 inclusive. "*The style of HAGGAI,*" observes *Henderson*, "*is not distinguished by any peculiar excellence; yet he is not destitute of pathos and vehemence, when reproving his countrymen for their negligence, exhorting them to the performance of duty.*"

Though in some instances our COMMENTATOR may not give the precise import of a passage, yet he never advances but what is consistent with Divine Truth, and always useful and practical, and often what betokens a profound acquaintance with the operations of the human mind under the

various trials and temptations which we meet with in this life; so that the observations made are ever interesting and instructive. CALVIN never deduces from a passage what is in itself erroneous or unsound, though in all cases he may not deduce what the text may legitimately warrant. There is, therefore, nothing dangerous in what he advances, though it may not be included in the passage explained. But for the most part his application of doctrine is what may be fully justified, and is often very striking, and calculated to instruct and edify.

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

J.O.

THRUSSINGTON

October 1848.

THE COMMENTARIES

OF JOHN CALVIN

ON THE PROPHET

HABAKKUK

CALVIN'S PREFACE TO HABAKKUK

Now follows THE PROPHET HABAKKUK;^{f1} but the time in which he discharged his office of a Teacher is not quite certain. The Hebrews, according to their usual manner, unhesitatingly assert that he prophesied under the king MANASSEH; but this conjecture is not well founded. We are however led to think that this prophecy was announced when the contumacy of the people had become irreclaimable. It is indeed probable, from the complaint which we shall have presently to notice, that the people had previously given many proofs of irremediable wickedness. To me it appears evident that the Prophet was sent, when others had in vain endeavored to correct the wickedness of the people. But as he denounces an approaching judgement on the CHALDEANS, he seems to have prophesied either under Manasseh or under the other kings before the time of ZEDECHIAH; but we cannot fix the exact time.^{f2}

The substance of the Book may be thus stated: — In the First chapter he complains of the rebellious obstinacy of the people, and deplores the corruptions which then prevailed; he then appears as the herald of God, and warns the Jews of their approaching ruin; he afterwards applies consolation, as God would punish the Chaldeans when their pride became intolerable. In the second chapter he exhorts the godly to patience by his own example, and speaks at large of the near ruin of Babylon; and in the third chapter, as we shall see, he turns to supplication and prayer.

We shall now come to the words.

CHAPTER 1

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTH.

<350101> HABAKKUK 1:1

1. The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

1. Onus quod vidit Chabakuk Propheta.

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

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

<350102> **HABAKKUK 1:2, 3**

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

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

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

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

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

We must bear this first in mind, that the Prophet relates here the secret colloquy he had with God: but it ought not to be ascribed to an unfeeling disposition, that in these words he wished to hasten God's vengeance against his own kindred; for it behaved the Prophet not only to be solicitous for the salvation of the people, but also to feel a concern for the

glory of God, yea, to burn with a holy zeal. As, then, he had in vain labored for a length of time, I doubt not but that, being as it were far removed from the presence of all witnesses, he here asks God, how long he purposed thus to bear with the wickedness of the people. We now apprehend the design of the Prophet and the import of his words.

But he says first, *How long, Jehovah, shall I cry, and thou hearest not? How long shall I cry to thee for violence, that is, on account of violence, and thou savest not?* We hence learn, that the Prophet had often prayed God to correct the people for their wickedness, or to contrive some means to prevent so much licentiousness in sinning. It is indeed probable that the Prophet had prayed as long as there was any hope; but when he saw that things were past recovery, he then prayed more earnestly that God would undertake the office of a judge, and chastise the people. For though the Prophet really condoled with those who perished, and was touched, as I have said, with a serious concern for their public safety, he yet preferred the glory of God: when, therefore, he saw that boldness in sin increased through impunity, and that the Jews in a manlier mocked God when they found that they could sin without being punished, he could not endure such unbridled wantonness. Besides, the Prophet may have spoken thus, not only as expressing his own feeling, but what he felt in common with all the godly; as though he had undertaken here a public duty, and utters a complaint common to all the faithful: for it is probable that all the godly, in so disordered a state of things, mourned alike. *How long, then, shall I cry? How long, he says, shall I cry on account of violence?* that is, When all things are in disorder, when there is now no regard for equity and justice, but men abandon themselves, as it were with loose reins, unto all kinds of wickedness, how long, Lord, wilt thou take no notice? But in these words the Prophet not only egresses his own feelings, but makes this kind of preface, that the Jews might better understand that the time of vengeance was come; for they were become not only altogether intolerable to God, but also to his servants. God indeed had suspended his judgement, though he had been often solicited to execute it by his Prophet. It hence appears, that their wickedness had made such advances that it would be no wonder if they were now severely chastised by the Lord; for they had by their sins not only provoked him against them, but also all the godly and the faithful.

He afterwards adds, *How long wilt thou show me iniquity, and make me to see trouble?* Here the Prophet briefly relates the cause of his indignation,

— that he could not, without great grief, yea, without anguish of mind, behold such evils prevailing among God’s chosen people; for they who apply this to the Chaldeans, do so strainedly, and without any necessity, and they have not observed the reason which I have stated — that the Prophet does not here teach the Jews, but prepares them for a coming judgement, as they could not but see that they were justly condemned, since they were proved guilty by the cry and complaints made by all the godly.

Now this passage teaches us, that all who really serve and love God, ought, according to the Prophet’s example, to burn with holy indignation whenever they see wickedness reigning without restraint among men, and especially in the Church of God. There is indeed nothing which ought to cause us more grief than to see men raging with profane contempt for God, and no regard had for his law and for divine truth, and all order trodden under foot. When therefore such a confusion appears to us, we must feel roused, if we have in us any spark of religion. If it be objected, that the Prophet exceeded moderation, the obvious answer is this, — that though he freely pours forth his feelings, there was nothing wrong in this before God, at least nothing wrong is imputed to him: for wherefore do we pray, but that each of us may unburden his cares, his griefs, and anxieties, by pouring them into the bosom of God? Since, then, God allows us to deal so familiarly with him, nothing wrong ought to be ascribed to our prayers when we thus freely pour forth our feelings, provided the bridle of obedience keeps us always within due limits, as was the case with the Prophet; for it is certain that he was retained under the influence of real kindness. Jeremiah did indeed pray with unrestrained fervor (<241510> Jeremiah 15:10): but his case was different from that of our Prophet; for he proceeds not here to an excess, as Jeremiah did when he cursed the day of his birth, and when he expostulated with God for being made a man of contention. But our Prophet undertakes here the defense of justice; for he could not endure the law of God to be made a sport, and men to allow themselves every liberty in sinning.

We now, then, see that the Prophet can be justly excused, though he expostulates here with God, for God does not condemn this freedom in our prayers; but, on the contrary, the end of praying is, that every one of us pour forth, as it is said in the Psalms, his heart before God. As, then, we communicate our cares and sorrows to God, it is no wonder that the

Prophet, according to the manner of men, says, Why dost thou show me iniquity, and make me to see trouble? Trouble is to be taken here in an active sense, and the verb תַּבִּיחַ, *tabith*, has a transitive meaning.^{f3} Some render it, Why dost thou look on trouble? as though the Prophet indignantly bore the connivance of God. But the context necessarily requires that this verb should be taken in a transitive sense. “Why dost thou show me iniquity?” and then, “and makest me to look on violence?” He says afterwards, in the third place, in my sight is violence. But I have said, that the word trouble is to be taken actively; for the prophet means not that he was worn out with weariness, but that wicked men were troublesome to the good and the innocent, as it is usually the case when a freedom in sinning prevails.

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

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

<350104> HABAKKUK 1:4

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

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

The Prophet confirms here what I have already said, and brings an excuse for his zeal; he proves that he was not without reason led to so great a warmth; for he saw that the law of God was trodden as it were under foot; he saw men so hardened in every kind of sin, that all religion and the fear of God had nearly been extinguished. Hence I have already said, that the Prophet was not here impelled by a carnal passion, as it often happens to us, when we defend ourselves from wrongs done to us; for when any one of us is injured, he immediately becomes incensed, while, at the same time, we suffer God's law to be a sport, His whole truth to be despised, and everything that is just to be violated. We are only tender on what concerns us individually, and in the meantime we easily forgive when God is wronged, and His truth despised. But the Prophet shows here that he was not made indignant through a private feeling, but because he could not bear the profanation of God's worship and the violation of His holy law.

He therefore says, that the law was dissolved or weakened, as though he said that God's law had no longer any authority or regard. Let us hence learn to rouse up ourselves, for we are very frigid, when the ungodly openly despise and even mock God. As, then, we are too unconcerned in this respect, let us learn, by the Prophet's example, to stimulate ourselves. For even Paul also shows, in an indirect way, that there is just reason for indignation — 'Be ye angry,' he says, 'and sin not,' (<490426> Ephesians 4:26); that is, every one ought to regard his own sins, so as to become an enemy to himself; and he ought also to feel indignant whenever he sees God offended.

This rule the Prophet now follows, *Weakened*, he says, *is the law*.^{f4} We know that when a sinful custom prevails, there is but little authority in what is taught: nor are human laws only despised when men's audacity breaks through all restraints, but even the very law of God is esteemed as nothing; for they think that everything erroneously done, by the consent of all, is lawful. We now then see that the Prophet felt great anguish of mind, like holy Lot (<011901> Genesis 19:1-38.), when he saw every regard for God almost extinct in the land, and especially among the chosen people, whom God had above all others consecrated to himself.

He then adds, *judgement goes not forth perpetually*. Absurdly do many regard this as having been said in the person of foolish men, who think that

there is no such thing as divine providence, when things in the world are in a disordered state: but the Prophet simply says, that all justice was suppressed. We have nearly the very same complaint in ^{<235904>}Isaiah 59:4. He then says, that judgement did not go forth perpetually, because the ungodly thought that no account was to be given by them. When, therefore, any one dared to say a word against them, they immediately boiled with rage, and like wild beasts fiercely attacked him. All then were silent, and nearly made dumb, when the ungodly thus prevailed and gathered boldness from the daily practice of licentiousness. Hence, ‘Go forth perpetually does not judgement;’ that is, “O Lord, things are now past hope, and there appears to be no end to our evils, except thou comest soon and applies a remedy beyond what our flesh can conceive.” *For the wicked*, he says, *surround the righteous*; that is, when there was any one who continued to retain some regard for religion and justice, immediately the wicked rose up against him on every side and surrounded him before and behind; so it happened, that no one dared to oppose the torrent, though frauds, rapines, outrages, cruelty, and even murders everywhere prevailed; if any righteous men still remained, they dared not come forth into the public, for the wicked beset them on all sides.

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

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

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

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

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

The Greek translators no doubt read בַּגּוֹרִים, for their version is — “Behold, ye despisers.”^{f5} But in Hebrew there is no ambiguity as to the word.

He afterwards adds — *And wonder ye, wonder.*^{f6} By these words the prophets express how dreadful God's judgement would be, which would astonish the Jews themselves. Had they not been extremely refractory they might have quietly received instruction, for God would have addressed them by his prophets, as though they had been his own children. They might thus, with composed minds, have listened to God speaking to them; but the time was now come when they were to be filled with astonishment. We hence see that the Prophet meant this in a few words — that there would be a new mode of teaching, which would overwhelm the unwilling with astonishment, because they would not endure to be ruled in a gentle manner, when the Lord required nothing from them but to render themselves teachable.

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

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

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

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

<350106> **HABAKKUK 1:6**

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

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

This verse is added by the Prophet as an explanation; for it was not enough to speak generally of God’s work, without reminding them that their destruction by the Chaldeans was nigh at hand. He does not indeed in this verse explain what would be the character of that judgement which he had mentioned in the last verse <350105> Habakkuk 1:5; but he will do this in what follows. Now the Prophets differ from Moses in this respect, for they show, as it were by the finger, what he threatened generally, and they declare the special judgements of God; as it is indeed evident from the demonstrative adverb, “Behold.” How necessary this was, we may gather from the perverseness of that people; for how distinctly soever the Prophets showed to them God’s judgements, so that they saw them with their eyes, yet so great was their insensibility, that they despised

denunciations so apparent. What, then, would have been done, if the Prophets had only said in general, 'God will not spare you!' This, then, is the reason why the Prophet, having spoken of God's terrible vengeance, now declares in express terms, that the Chaldeans were already armed by Him to execute His judgement. The rest we leave for tomorrow.

PRAYER

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

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTH

IN the lecture of yesterday the Prophet began to show from whom the Jews were to expect the vengeance of God, even from the Chaldeans, who would come, not by their own instinct, but by the hidden impulse of God. God indeed testifies that he should be the author of this war, and that the Chaldeans would fight, as it were, under his auspices. *I am he, he says, who excites*, etc. Then by calling the Chaldeans *a bitter and hasty nation*, he intended seriously to terrify the Jews, who had heedlessly despised all threatenings.^{f7} It was not indeed a subject of praise to the Chaldeans, that they were bitter and impetuous: but the Lord could turn these vices to a good purpose, inasmuch as he elicits light from darkness. When, therefore, we read that the Chaldeans were bitter, and also hasty, God thus intimates that he can employ the vices of men in executing his judgements, and yet contract hence no spot nor blemish; for we cannot possibly pollute him with our filth, as he scatters it far away by the brightness of his justice and equity.

He afterwards adds, *They shall march through the latitudes^{f8} of the earth, to possess habitations not their own*. He means that there would be no obstacles in the way of the Chaldeans, but that they would spread themselves over the whole earth, and occupy regions far remote. For they who fear, dare not thus disperse themselves, but, on the contrary, they advance cautiously with a collected army; but those, who have already obtained victory, march on to lay waste the land. This is what the Prophet says the Chaldeans would do.

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

<350107> **HABAKKUK 1:7**

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

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

By saying that the Chaldeans would be terrible and dreadful, he praises not their virtues; but, as I have already reminded you, he shows that they would be prepared to do his service by executing his vengeance: and he so regulated his judgement, that he used their cruelty for a good purpose. Thus we see that the worst of men are in God's hand, as Satan is, who is their head; and yet that God is not implicated in their wickedness, as some insane men maintain; for they say — That if God governs the world by his providence, he becomes thus the author of sin, and men's sins are to be ascribed to him. But Scripture teaches us far otherwise, — that the wicked are led here and there by the hidden power of God, and that yet the fault is in them, when they do anything in a deceitful and cruel manner, and that God ever remains just, whatever use he may make of instruments, yea, the very worst.

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

meantime could use such instruments in such a way as to preserve some moderation in his judgements. It follows —

<350108> **HABAKKUK 1:8**

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

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

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

He then adds, that *they would be fiercer than the evening wolves*. The wolf is a rapacious animal; and when he ranges about all the day in vain seeking what he may devour, then in the evening hunger kindles his rage. There is, therefore, nothing more dreadful than hungry wolves. But, as I have said, except they find some prey about the evening, they become the more furious. We shall meet with the same simile in <360301> Zephaniah 3:1. We now see the drift of the Prophet’s words.

He adds that *their horsemen would be numerous*.^{f9} He now sets forth their power, lest the Jews should have recourse to vain hopes, because they might obtain some help either from the Egyptians or other neighbors. The Prophet shows that all such hopes would be wholly vain; for had they gathered auxiliaries from all quarters, still the Chaldeans would exceed them in power and number.

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

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

<350109> **HABAKKUK 1:9**

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

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

By saying that they would come to the prey, he means that they would have no trouble or labor, for they would be victorious before they had any contest, or had any war with their enemies. The meaning then is, that the Chaldeans would not come to spend much time in warfare, as when there is a strong power to resist; but that they would only come for the booty, for the Jews would be frightened, and instantly submit themselves. And by these words the Prophet intimates, that there would be neither strength nor courage in a people so refractory: for God thus debilitates the hearts of those who fiercely resist his word. Whenever, then, men become strong against God, he so melts their hearts, that they cannot resist their fellow-mortals; and thus he mocks their confidence, or rather their madness. Lest then the Jews should still harbor any hope from the chance of war, the Prophet says that the Chaldeans would only come for the prey, for all would become subject to them.

He afterwards adds, that *the meeting of their faces would be like the oriental wind*. The word גִּימֵ, *gime*, means what is opposite; and its derivative signifies meeting or opposition (*occursus*.) We indeed know that the east wind was very injurious to the land of Judea, that it dried up vegetation, yea, that it consumed as it were the whole produce of the earth. The violence of that wind was also very great. Hence whenever the Prophets wished to express a violent impetuosity, they added this comparison of the east wind. It was therefore the same as though the Prophet had said that the Jews would now in vain flatter themselves; for as soon as they perceived the blowing of the east wind, they would flee away, knowing that they would be wholly unable to stand against it.^{f10}

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

<350110> **HABAKKUK 1:10**

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

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

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

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

<350111> **HABAKKUK 1:11**

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

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

The Prophet now begins to give some comfort to the faithful, lest they should succumb under so grievous evils. He has hitherto directed his discourse to that irreclaimable people, but he now turns to the remnant; for

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

And he says — *now he will change his spirit*. He bids the faithful to entertain hope, because the Chaldeans, after having poured forth all their fury, will be punished by the Lord for their arrogance, for it will be intolerable. This may indeed seem frigid to ungodly men; for what wonder is it that the Chaldeans, after having obtained so many victories, should grow haughty and exult in their success, as is commonly the case? But as this is a fixed principle with us, that men's pride becomes intolerable to God when they extremely exult and preserve no moderation — this is a very powerful argument — that is, that whosoever thus raises his horns shall suddenly be laid prostrate by the Lord. And Scripture also ever sets this before us, that God beats down supercilious pride, and does this that we may know that destruction is nigh all the ungodly, when they thus grow violently mad, and know not that they are mortals. It was then for this reason that the Prophet mentions what he says here; it was that the faithful might hope for some end to the violence of their enemies, for God would check their pride when they should transgress. But he says — *then He will change his spirit*; not that there was before any humility in the Chaldeans, but that success inebriated them, yea, and deprived them of all reason. And it is a common thing that a person who has fortune as it were in his hand, forgets himself, and thinks himself no longer a mortal. Great kings do indeed confess that they are men; but we see how madness lays

hold on them; for, as I have said, being deluded by prosperity, they deem themselves to be nothing less than gods.

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

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

He afterwards adds — *and shall act impiously*. The verb אָשֵׁם, *ashem* I refer to the end of the verse — where he ascribes his power to his own god. And the Prophet adds this explanation, in order that the Jews might know what kind of sin would be the sin of the king of Babylon. He then charges him with sacrilege, because he would think that he had become the conqueror of Judea through the kindness of his idol, so that he would make nothing of the power and glory of the true God. Since then the Babylonian would transfer God's glory to his own idol, his own ruin would be thus made ripe; for the Lord would undertake his own cause, and execute

vengeance on such a sacrilege; for he speaks here no doubt of the Babylonian, and according to his view, when he says —

This his strength is that of his god; but were any inclined to explain this of the true God, as some do, he would make a harsh and a forced construction; for the Babylonians did not worship the true God, but were devoted, as it is well known, to their own superstitions. The Prophet then no doubt makes known here to the faithful the pride with which the Babylonians would become elated, and thus provoke God's wrath against themselves; and also the sacrilegious boasting in which they would indulge, ascribing the victories given them to their own idols, which could not be done without daring reproach to the true God.^{f11} It now follows —

<350112> **HABAKKUK 1:12**

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

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

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

This then is what the prophet means when he adds — *Art not thou our God?* The question is much more emphatical than if he had simply declared that the true God was worshipped in Judea, and would therefore be the protector of that nation; for when the Prophet puts a question, he means, according to what is commonly understood in Hebrew, that the thing admits of no doubt. “What! art not thou our God?” We hence see

that there is a contrast between the wicked and impious boastings in which the profane indulge, and the holy confidence which the faithful have, who exult in their God. But that the discourse is addressed to God rather than to the ungodly is not done without reason, for it would have been useless to contend with the wicked. This is indeed sometimes necessary, for when the reprobate openly reproach God we cannot restrain ourselves; nor is it right that we refrain from testifying that we regard all their slanders as of no account; but we cannot so courageously oppose their audacity as when we have the matter first settled between us and God, and be able to say with the Prophets — “Thou art our God.” Whosoever then would boldly contend with the ungodly must first have to do with God, and confirm and ratify as it were that compact which God has proposed to us, even that we are his people, and that he in his turn will be always our God. As then God thus covenants with us, our faith must be really made firm, and then let us go forth and contend against all the ungodly. This is the order which the Prophet observes here, and what is to be observed by us — Art not thou our God?

He also adds — *long since*, מֵקֶדָם, *mekodam*, by which word the Prophet invites the attention of the faithful to the covenant which God had made, not yesterday nor the day before that, with his people, but many ages before, even 400 years before he redeemed their fathers from Egypt. Since then the favor of God to the Jews had been confirmed for so long a time, it is not without reason that the Prophet says here — *Thou art our God from the beginning*; that is, “the religion which we embrace has been delivered to us by thy hands, and we know that thou art its author; for our faith recumbs not on the opinion of men, but is sustained by thy word. Since, then, we have found so often and in so many ways, and for so many years, that thou art our God, there is now no room for doubt.”^{f12}

He then subjoins — *we shall not die*. What the Jews say of this place, that it had been corrected by the scribes, seems not to me probable; for the reason they give is very frivolous. They suppose that it was written lo tamut, Thou diest not, and that the letter nun had been introduced, “we shall not die,” because the expression offended those scribes, as though the Prophet compared God to men, and ascribed to him a precarious immortality; but they would have been very foolish critics. I therefore think that the word was written by the Prophet as we now read it, Thou art our God, we shall not die. Some explain this as a prayer — “let us not

die;” and the future is often taken in this sense in Hebrew; but this exposition is not suitable to the present passage; for the Prophet, as I have already said, rises up here as a conqueror, and disperses as mists all those foolish boastings of which he had been speaking, as though he said — “we shall not die, for we are under the protection of God.”

I have already explained why he turns his discourse to God: but this is yet the conclusion of the argument, — that as God had adopted that people, and received them into favor, and testified that he would be their defender, the Prophet confidently draws this inference, — that this people cannot perish, for they are preserved by God. No power of the world, nor any of its defences, can indeed afford us this security; for whatever forces may all mortals bring either to protect or help us, they shall all perish together with us. Hence, the protection of God alone is that which can deliver us from the danger of death. We now perceive why the Prophet joins together these two things, “Thou art our God,” and “We shall not die;” nor can indeed the one be separated from the other; for when we are under the protection of God, we must necessarily continue safe and safe for ever; not that we shall be free from evils, but that the Lord will deliver us from thousand deaths, and ever preserve our life in safety. When only he affords us a taste of eternal salvation, some spark of life will ever continue in our hearts, until he shows to us, when at length redeemed, as I have already said, from thousand deaths, the perfection of that blessed life, which is now promised to us, but as yet is looked for, and therefore hid under the custody of hope.

PRAYER

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

into that eternal inheritance, which thy Son has purchased for us
by his own blood. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTH

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

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

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There is, moreover, much weight in the words which follow, *Jehovah! for judgement has thou set him*. This temptation ever occurs to us, whenever we strive to put our trust in God — What does this mean? for God now forsakes us, and exposes us to the caprice of the wicked they are allowed to do what they please, and God interferes not. How, then, can we cherish hope under these perplexities?" The Prophet now sets up a shield against this temptations — "Thou," he says, "hast appointed him for judgement." For he ascribes it to God's providence, that the Assyrians had with so much wantonness wasted the land, or would waste it when they came; for he speaks of things yet future — "Thou," he says, "hast appointed him for judgement."

This is a truth much needed: for Satan darkens, as with clouds, the favor of God, when any adversity happens to us, and when God himself thus

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

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

upside down: for the profane then glamour against God, and charge him with listlessness; and others cry out, that all things are thus changed fortuitously and at random; and hence they call fortune blind. It is then difficult, as I have said, to retain a fast hold on this truth. The Prophet, therefore, in order to support his own weakness, sets before himself this title of God, *Thou, the strong God*, or the *rock*, etc.; for צור, *tsur* means properly a rock, but it is to be taken here for God of strength. Why? “Behold, we indeed see revolutions, which not only make our faith to totter, but also dissipate as it were all our thoughts: but how much soever the world revolve in confusion, yet God is a rock; His purpose fails not, nor wavers; but remains ever firm.” We now then see why the Prophet calls God strong.^{f14}

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

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

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

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

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

And he says, O God, *thou art pure in eyes, thou lookest not on evil*. Some render the verb טָהוֹר, *theur* in the imperative mood, *clear the eyes*; but they are mistaken; for the verse contains two parts, the one contrary to the other. The Prophet reasons from the nature of God, and then he states what is of an opposite character. Thou, God, he says, *art pure in eyes*; hence thou canst not look on evil; it is not consistent with thy nature to pass by the vices of men, for every iniquity is hateful to thee. Thus the Prophet sets before himself the nature of God. Then he adds, that experience is opposed to this; for the wicked, he says, exult; and while they miserably oppress the innocent, no one affords any help. How is this, except that God sleeps in heaven, and neglects the affairs of men? We now then understand the Prophet's meaning in this verse. ^{f15}

By saying that God is *pure in eyes*, he assumes what ought to be deemed certain and indubitable by all men of piety. But as God's justice does not always appear, the Prophet has a struggle; and he shows that he in a

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

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

For he then asks, according to the common judgement of the flesh, *Why dost thou look on, when the ungodly devours one more just than himself?* The Prophet here does not divest God of his power, but speaks in doubt, and contends not so much with God as with himself. A profane man would have said, “There is no God, there is no providence,” or, “He cares not for the world, he takes his pleasure in heaven.” But the Prophet says, “Thou

seest, Lord.” Hence he ascribes to God what peculiarly belongs to him — that he does not neglect the world which he has created. At the same time he here inclines two ways, and alternates; *Why does thou look on, when the ungodly devours one more just than himself?* He says not that the world revolves by chance, nor that God takes his delight and ease in heaven, as the Epicureans hold; but he confesses that the world is seen by God, and that he exercises care over the affairs of men: notwithstanding, as he could not see his way clear in a state of things so confused, he argues the point rather with himself than with God. We now see the import of this sentence. The Prophet, however, proceeds —

<350114> HABAKKUK 1:14, 15	
14. And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, <i>that have no ruler over them?</i>	14. Facis hominem quasi pisces maris, quasi reptile, quod caret duce (<i>ad verbum</i> , non est dux in illo.)
15. They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad.	15. Totum hamo suo attrahet, colliget in sagemam suam, et congregabit in rete suum; propterea gaudebit et exultabit (<i>hoc est</i> , gaudet et exultat.)

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

or fishes; and then he adds, He draws up the whole by his hook, he collects them into his drag, he gathers them into his net, he exults. ^{f16}

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

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

“Thou sees how I am distracted, and also held fast bound — distracted by many absurd thoughts, so that I am almost confounded, and held fast bound by great perplexities, from which I cannot extricate myself. Do thou, O Lord, unfold to me these knots, and concentrate my scattered thoughts, that I may understand what is true, and what I am to believe; and especially remove from me this doubt, lest it should shake my faith; O Lord, grant that I may at length know and fully understand how thou art just, and overrules, consistently with perfect equity, those things which seem to be so confused.”

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

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

<350116> HABAKKUK 1:16

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

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

The Prophet confirms the closing sentence of the last verse; for he explains what that joy was of which he had spoken, even the joy by which the wicked, as it were, designedly provoke God against themselves. It is indeed an abominable thing when the ungodly take delight in their vices; but it is still more atrocious when they deride God himself. Such, then, is the account now added by the Prophet, as though he had said, “Not only do

the ungodly felicitate themselves while thou sparest them, or for a time bearest with them; but they now rise up against thee and deride all thy majesty, and openly blaspheme against heaven itself; for they sacrifice to their own net, and offer incense to their drag.” By this metaphor the Prophet intimates, that the wicked do not only become hardened when they succeed in their vices, but that they also ascribe to themselves the praise of justice; for they consider that to be rightly done which has been attended with success. They thus dethrone God, and put themselves in his place. We now then see the Prophet’s meaning.

But this passage discovers to us the secret impiety of all those who do not serve God sincerely and with an honest mind. There is indeed imprinted on the hearts of men a certain conviction respecting the existence of a God; for none are so barbarous as not to have some sense of religion: and thus all are rendered inexcusable, as they carry in their hearts a law which is sufficient to make them a thousand times guilty. But at the same time the ungodly, and those who are not illuminated by faith, bury this knowledge, for they are enveloped in themselves: and when some recollection of God creeps in, they are at first impressed, and ascribe some honor to him; but this is evanescent, for they soon suppress it as much as they can; yea they even strive to extinguish (though they cannot) this knowledge and whatever light they have from heaven. This is what the Prophet now graphically sets forth in the person of the Assyrian king. He had before said, “This power is that of his God.” He had complained that the Assyrians would give to their idols what was peculiar to God alone, and thus deprive him of his right: but he says now, that they would *sacrifice to their own drag, and offer incense to their net*. This is a very different thing: for how could they sacrifice to their idols, if they ascribed to their drag whatever victories they had gained? Now, by the words drag and net, the Prophet means their efforts, strength, forces, power, counsels, and policies as they call them, and whatever else there be which profane men arrogate to themselves. But what is it to sacrifice to their own net? The Assyrian did this, because he thought that he surpassed all others in craftiness, because he thought himself so courageous as not to hesitate to make war with all nations, regarding himself well prepared with forces and justified in his proceedings; and because he became successful and omitted nothing calculated to ensure victory. Thus the Assyrian, as I have said, regarded as nothing his idols; for he put himself in the place of all the gods. But if it be asked whence

came his success, we must answer, that the Assyrian ought to have ascribed it all to the one true God: but he thought that he prospered through his own valour. If we refer to counsel, it is certain that God is he who governs the counsels and minds of men; but the Assyrian thought that he gained everything by his own skill. If, again, we speak of strength, whence was it? and of courage, whence was it, but from God? but the Assyrian appropriated all these things to himself. What regard, then, had he for God? We see how he now takes away all honor even from his own idols, and attributes everything to himself.

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

He then adds, *because in (or by) them is his fat portion and his rich meat.* Though some render **בְּרֵאשִׁית**, *berae*, *choice* meat, and others, *fat* meat, I yet prefer the meaning of rich.^{f17} His meat then will be rich. The Prophet intimates here that men are so blinded by prosperity that they sacrifice to themselves, and hence the more deserving of reproof is their ingratitude; for

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

<350117> HABAKKUK 1:17	
17. Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?	17. An propterea extendet ^{f18} sagenam suam, et assiduus erit ad occidendas gentes, ut non parcat (<i>alii vertuat, annon negative; atqui debuisset esse</i> [הלוא על-כן])?

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

Prophet's complaint; but we shall find in the next lecture how he recovers himself.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as it cannot be but that, owing to the infirmity of our flesh, we must be shaken and tossed here and there by the many turbulent commotions of this world, — O grant, that our faith may be sustained by this support — that thou art the governor of the world, and that men were not only once created by thee, but are also preserved by thy hand, and that thou art also a just judge, so that we may duly restrain ourselves; and though we must often have to bear many insults, let us yet never fail, until our faith shall become victorious over all trials, and until we, having passed through continued succession of contests, shall at length reach that celestial rest, which Christ thy Son has obtained for us. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND NINTH

<350201> HABAKKUK 2:1

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

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

We have seen in the first chapter <350102> Habakkuk 1:2-3 that the Prophet said in the name of all the faithful. It was indeed a hard struggle, when all things were in a perplexed state and no outlet appeared. The faithful might have thought that all things happened by chance, that there was no divine providence; and even the Prophet uttered complaints of this kind. He now begins to recover himself from his perplexities; and he ever speaks in the person of the godly, or of the whole Church. For what is done by some interpreters, who confine what is said to the prophetic office, I do not approve; and it may be easy from the contempt to learn, that the Prophet does not speak according to his private feeling, but that he represents the feelings of all the godly. So then we ought to collect this verse with the complaints, which we have before noticed; for the Prophet, finding himself sinking, and as it were overwhelmed in the deepest abyss, raises himself up above the judgement and reason of men, and comes nearer to God, that he might see from on high the things which take place on earth, and not judge according to the understanding of his own flesh, but by the light of the Holy Spirit. For the tower of which he speaks is patience arising from hope. If indeed we would struggle perseveringly to the last, and at length obtain the victory over all trials and conflicts, we must rise above the world.

Some understand by *tower* and *citadel* the Word of God: and this may in some measure be allowed, though not in every respect suitable. If we more fully weigh the reason for the metaphor, we shall be at no loss to know that the tower is the recess of the mind, where we withdraw ourselves from the world; for we find how disposed we are all to entertain distrust. When, therefore, we follow our own inclination, various temptations immediately lay hold on us; nor can we even for a moment exercise hope in God: and many things are also suggested to us, which take away and deprive us of all confidence: we become also involved in variety of thoughts, for when Satan finds men wandering in their imaginations and blending many things together, he so entangles them that they cannot by any means come nigh to God. If then we would cherish faith in our hearts, we must rise above all these difficulties and hindrances. And the Prophet by tower means this, that he extricated himself from the thoughts of the flesh; for there would have been no end nor termination to his doubts, had he tried to form a judgement according to his own understanding; *I will stand, he says, on my tower,*^{f19} *I and I will set myself on the citadel.* In short, the sentence carries this meaning — that the Prophet renounced the judgement of men, and broke through all those snares by which Satan entangles us and prevents us to rise above the earth.

He then adds, *I will watch to see what he may say to me*, that is, I will be there vigilant; for by watching he means vigilance and waiting, as though he had said, “Though no hope should soon appear, I shall not despond; nor shall I forsake my station; but I shall remain constantly in that tower, to which I wish now to ascend: *I will watch then to see what he may say to me.*” The reference is evidently to God; for the opinion of those is not probable, who apply this “saying” to the ministers of Satan. For the Prophet says first, ‘I will see what he may say to me,’ and then he adds, ‘and what I shall answer.’ They who explain the words ‘what he may say,’ as referring to the wicked who might oppose him for the purpose of shaking his faith, overlook the words of the Prophet, for he speaks here in the singular number; and as there is no name expressed, the Prophet no doubt meant God. But were the words capable of admitting this explanation, yet the very drift of the argument shows, that the passage has the meaning which I have attached to it. For how could the faithful answer the calumnies by which their faith was assailed, when the profane opprobriously mocked and derided them — how could they satisfactorily

disprove such blasphemies, did they not first attend to what God might say to them? For we cannot confute the devil and his ministers, except we be instructed by the word of God. We hence see that the Prophet observes the best order in what he states, when he says in the first place, 'I will see what God may say to me;' and in the second place, 'I shall then be taught to answer to my chiding;' that is, "If the wicked deride my faith, I shall be able boldly to confute them; for the Lord will suggest to me such things as may enable me to give a full answer." We now perceive the simple and real meaning of this verse. It remains for us to accommodate the doctrine to our own use.

It must be first observed, that there is no remedy, when such trials as those mentioned by the Prophet in the first chapter ^{<350104>}Habakkuk 1:4-17 meet us, except we learn to raise up our minds above the world. For if we contend with Satan, according to our own view of things, he will a hundred times overwhelm us, and we can never be able to resist him. Let us therefore know, that here is shown to us the right way of fighting with him, when our minds are agitated with unbelief, when doubts respecting God's providence creep in, when things are so confused in this world as to involve us in darkness, so that no light appears: we must bid adieu to our own reason; for all our thoughts are nothing worth, when we seek, according to our own reason, to form a judgement. Until then the faithful ascend to their tower and stand in their citadel, of which the Prophet here speaks, their temptations will drive them here and there, and sink them as it were in a bottomless gulf. But that we may more fully understand the meaning, we must know, that there is here an implied contrast between the tower and the citadel, which the Prophet mentions, and a station on earth. As long then as we judge according to our own perceptions, we walk on the earth; and while we do so, many clouds arise, and Satan scatters ashes in our eyes, and wholly darkens our judgement, and thus it happens, that we lie down altogether confounded. It is hence wholly necessary, as we have before said, that we should tread our reason under foot, and come nigh to God himself.

We have said, that the tower is the recess of the mind; but how can we ascend to it? even by following the word of the Lord. For we creep on the earth; nay, we find that our flesh ever draws us downward: except then the truth from above becomes to us as it were wings, or a ladder, or a vehicle, we cannot rise up one foot; but, on the contrary, we shall seek refuges on

the earth rather than ascend into heaven. But let the word of God become our ladder, or our vehicle, or our wings, and, however difficult the ascent may be, we shall yet be able to fly upward, provided God's word be allowed to have its own authority. We hence see how unsuitable is the view of those interpreters, who think that the tower and the citadel is the word of God; for it is by God's word, as I have already said, that we are raised up to this citadel, that is, to the safeguard of hope; where we may remain safe and secure while looking down from this eminence on those things which disturb us and darken all our senses as long as we lie on the earth. This is one thing.

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

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

Let us now inquire what is the purpose of this watching: *I will watch to see*, he says, *what he may say to me*. There seems to be an impropriety in the expression; for we do not properly see what is said. But the Prophet connects together here two metaphors. To speak strictly correct, he ought to have said, “I will continue attentive to hear what he may say;” but he says, *I will watch to see what he may say*. The metaphor is found correctly used in ^{<198508>}Psalm 85:8,

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

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

We hence see the object of the Prophet; for he meant to express the greatest attention, as though he had said, that the faithful would ever wander in their thoughts, except they carefully concentrated both their eyes and their ears, and all their senses, on God, and continually restrained themselves, lest vagrant speculations or imaginations should lead them astray. And further, the Prophet teaches us, that we ought to have such reverence for God’s word as to deem it sufficient for us to hear his voice. Let this, then, be our understanding, to obey God speaking to us, and reverently to embrace his word, so that he may deliver us from all troubles, and also keep our minds in peace and tranquillity.

God’s speaking, then, is opposed to all the obstreperous clamours of Satan, which he never ceases to sound in our ears. For as soon as any

temptation takes place, Satan suggests many things to us, and those of various kinds: — “What will you do? what advice will you take? see whether God is propitious to you from whom you expect help. How can you dare to trust that God will assist you? How can he extricate you? What will be the issue?” As Satan then disturbs us in various ways, the Prophet shows that the word of God alone is sufficient for us all, then, who indulge themselves in their own counsels, deserve to be forsaken by God, and to be left by him to be driven up and down, and here and there, by Satan; for the only unfailing security for the faithful is to acquiesce in God’s word.

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

We may also gather from the whole verse, that we can form no judgement of God’s providence, except by the light of celestial truth. It is hence no wonder that many fall away under trials, yea, almost the whole world; for few there are who ascend into the citadel of which the Prophet speaks, and who are willing to hear God speaking to them. Hence, presumption and

arrogance blind the minds of men, so that they either speak evil of God who addresses them, or accuse fortune, or maintain that there is nothing certain: thus they murmur within themselves, and arrogate to themselves more than they ought, and never submit to God's word. Let us proceed, -

<350202> HABAKKUK 2:2, 3	
2. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make <i>it</i> plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.	2. Et respondit mihi Jehova et dixit, Scribe visionem, et explana super tabulas, ut currat legens in ea:
3. For the vision <i>is</i> yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.	3. Quia adhuc visio ad tempus statutum, et loquetur ad finem, et non mentietur; si moram fecerit, expecta eam; quia veniendo veniet, et non tardabit.

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

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

Write, then, *the vision*, and *make it plain*; for באר, *bar* properly means, to declare plainly.^{f21} Unfold it then, he says, *on tables, that he may run who reads it*; that is, that the writing may not cause the readers to stop. Write it in large characters, that any one, in running by, may see what is written. Then he adds, *for the vision shall be for an appointed time*.

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

At the end, he says, *it will speak*.^{f22} In a word, the Prophet intimates, that honor is to be given to God's word, that we ought to be fully persuaded that God speaks what is true, and be so satisfied with his promises as though what is promised were really possessed by us. *At the end*, then, *it will speak and it will not lie*.^{f23} Here the Prophet means, that fulfillment would take place, so that experience would at length prove, that God had not spoken in vain, nor for the sake of deceiving; but yet that there was need of patience; for, as it has been said, God intends not to indulge our fervid and importunate desires by an immediate fulfillment, but his design is to hold us in suspense. And this is the true sacrifice of praise, when we restrain ourselves, and remain firm in the persuasion that God cannot deceive nor lie, though he may seem for a time to trifle with us. *It will not, then, lie*.

He afterwards adds, *If it will delay, wait for it*. He again expresses still more clearly the true character of faith, that it does not break forth immediately into complaints, when God connives at things, when he suffers us to be oppressed by the wicked, when he does not immediately succor us; in a word, when he does not without delay fulfill what he has promised in his word. If, then, *it delays, wait for it*. He again repeats the same thing, *coming*

it will come; that is, however it may be, God, who is not only true, but truth itself, will accomplish his own promises. The fulfillment, then, of the promise will take place in due time.

But we must notice the contrariety, *If it will delay, it will come, it will not delay*. The two clauses seem to be contrary the one to the other. But delay, mentioned first, has a reference to our haste. It is a common proverb, “Even quickness is delay to desire.” We indeed make such haste in all our desires, that the Lord, when he delays one moment, seems to be too slow. Thus it may come easily to our mind to expostulate with him on the ground of slowness. God, then, is said on this account to delay in his promises; and his promises also as to their accomplishment may be said to be delayed. But if we have regard to the counsel of God, there is never any delay; for he knows all the points of time, and in slowness itself he always hastens, however this may be not comprehended by the flesh. We now, then, apprehend what the Prophet means. ¹²⁴

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

He uses two words, to *write* and to *explain*; which some pervert rather than rightly distinguish: for as the Prophets were wont to write, and also to set forth the summaries or the heads of their discourses, they think that it was a command to Habakkuk to write, that he might leave on record to posterity what he had said; and then to publish what he taught as an edict,

that it might be seen by the people passing by, not only for a day or for a few days. But I do not think that the Prophet speaks with so much refinement: I therefore consider that to write and to explain on tables mean the same thing. And what is added, *that he may run who reads it*, is to be understood as I have already explained it; for God intended to set forth this declaration as memorable and worthy of special notice. It was not usual with the Prophets to write in long and large characters; but the Prophet mentions here something peculiar, because the declaration was worthy of being especially observed. What is similar to this is said in ^{<230801>}Isaiah 8:1, ‘Write on a tablet with a man’s pen.’ By a man’s pen is to be understood common writing, such as is comprehended by the rudest and the most ignorant. To the same purpose is what God bids here his servant Habakkuk to do. *Write*, he says how? Not as Prophecies are wont to be written, for the Prophets set before the people the heads of their discourses; but write, he says, so that he who runs may read, and that though he may be inattentive, he may yet see what is written; for the table itself will plainly show what it contains.

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

And by saying that *the vision is yet for a time*, he shows, as I have briefly explained, what great reverence is due to heavenly truth. For to wish God to conform to our rule is extremely preposterous and unreasonable: and there is no place for faith, if we expect God to fulfill immediately what he promises. It is hence the trial of faith to acquiesce in God’s word, when its accomplishment does in no way appear. As then the Prophet teaches us, that *the vision is yet for a time*, he reminds us that we have no faith, except we are satisfied with God’s word alone, and suspend our desires until the seasonable time comes, that which God himself has appointed. *The vision*, then, *yet* shall be. But we are inclined to reduce, as it were, to nothing the power of God, except he accomplishes what he has said: “Yet, yet,” says the Prophet, “the vision shall be;” that is, “Though God does not stretch forth his hand, still let what he has spoken be sufficient for you: let then

the vision itself be enough for you; let it be deemed worthy of credit, so that the word of God may on its own account be believed; and let it not be tried according to the common rule; for men charge God with falsehood, except he immediately yields to their desires. Let then the vision itself be counted sufficiently solid and firm, until the suitable time shall come.” And the word מועד, *muod*, ought to be noticed; for the Prophet does not speak simply of time, but, as I have already said, he points out a certain and a preordained time. When men make an agreement, they on both sides fix the day: but it would be the highest presumption in us to require that God should appoint the day according to our will. It belongs, then, to him to appoint the times, and so to govern all things, that we may approve of whatever he does.

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

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

PRAYER

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

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND TENTH

THE Prophet taught us yesterday, that we ought to allow God his right of speaking to us, and of sustaining us by his own word, until the ripe time shall come, when he shall really fulfill what he has promised. Then an exhortation follows, added at the close of the verse — that we are to exercise patience; and the Apostle also, referring to this passage in <581038> Hebrews 10:38, makes a similar application. He indeed quotes what we shall find in the next verse, ‘The just by his faith shall live;’ but he had in view the whole context; and at the same time he reminds us of the Prophet’s object here in exalting the authority of God’s word. The exhortation, then, is briefly this — that though God may keep us in suspense, we yet ought not to cast away hope, for he knows when it is expedient for us that he should stretch forth his hand. And as there are two clauses, as I said yesterday, which seem at first sight to be inconsistent the one with the other, the Prophet very fitly joins them together, and considers them to be in perfect harmony; for though God may appear to delay, yet he is not slower than what is necessary and expedient. Let us then be fully persuaded that there is in God prudence and wisdom enough to assist us as soon as it may be needful. The Prophet now reminds us that it is no wonder if God seems to us to delay, for we are too hasty in our desires. Let therefore this fervor be restrained, so that we may subject our feelings to the providence and purpose of God. Let us now proceed —

<350204> HABAKKUK 2:4

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

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

This verse stands connected with the last, for the Prophet means to show that nothing is better than to rely on God’s word, how much soever may various temptations assault our souls. We hence see that nothing new is said here, hut that the former doctrine is confirmed — that our salvation is rendered safe and certain through God’s promise alone, and that therefore

we ought not to seek any other haven, where we might securely sustain all the onsets of Satan and of the world. But he sets the two clauses the one opposed to the other: every man who would fortify himself would ever be subject to various changes, and never attain a quiet mind; then comes the other clause — that man cannot otherwise obtain rest than by faith.

But the former part is variously explained. Some interpreters think the word **עפלה**, *ophle*, to be a noun, and render it elevation, which is not unsuitable; and indeed I hesitate not to regard this as its real meaning, for the Hebrews call a citadel **עופל**, *ouphel*, rightly deriving it from **עפל**, *ophle*, to ascend. What some others maintain, that it signifies to strengthen, is not well founded. Some again give this explanation — that the unbelieving seek a stronghold for themselves, that they may fortify themselves; and this makes but little difference as to the thing itself. But interpreters vary, and differ as to the meaning of the sentence; for some substitute the predicate for the subject, and the subject for the predicate, and elicit this meaning from the Prophet's words — “Every one whose mind is not at ease seeks a fortress, where he may safely rest and strengthens himself;” and others give this view — “He who is proud, or who thinks himself well fortified, shall ever be of an unquiet mind.” And this latter meaning is what I approve, only that I retain the import of the word **עפלה**, *ophle*, as though it was said — “where there is an elation of mind there is no tranquillity.”

Let us see first what their view is who give the other explanation. They say that the unbelieving, being obstinate and perverted in their minds, ever seek where they may be in safety, for they are full of suspicions, and having no regard to God they resort to the world for those remedies, by which they may escape evils and dangers. This is their view. But the Prophet, as I have already said, does here, on the contrary, denounce punishment on the unbelieving, as though he had said — “This reward, which they have deserved, shall be repaid to them — that they shall always torment themselves.” The contrast will thus be more obvious; and when we say that God punishes the unbelieving, when he suffers them to be driven here and there, and also harasses their minds with various tormenting thoughts, a more fruitful doctrine is elicited. When therefore the Prophet says that there is no calmness of mind possessed by those who deem themselves well fortified, he intimates that they are their own

executioners, for they seek for themselves many troubles, many sorrows, many anxieties, and contrive and mingle together many designs and purposes; now they think of one thing, then they turn to another; for the Hebrews say that the soul is made right when we acquiesce in a thing and continue in a tranquil state of mind; but when confused thoughts distract us, then they say that our soul is not right in us. We now perceive the real meaning of the Prophet.

Behold, he says: by this demonstrative particle he intimates that what he teaches us may be clearly seen if we attend to daily events. The meaning then is, that a proof of this fact exists evidently in the common life of men — that he who fortifies himself, and is also elated with self confidence, never finds a tranquil haven, for some new suspicion or fear ever disturbs his mind. Hence it comes that the soul entangles itself in various cares and anxieties. This is the reward, as I have said, which is allotted by God's just judgement to the unbelieving; for God, as he testifies by Isaiah, offers to us rest; and they who reject this invaluable benefit, freely offered to them by God, deserve that they should not only be tormented in one way, but be also harassed by endless agitations, and that they should also vex and torment themselves. It is indeed true that he who is fortified may also acquiesce in God's word; but the word **עפלה**, *ophle*, refers to the state of the mind. Whosoever, then, swells with vain confidence, when he finds that he has many auxiliaries according to the flesh, shall ever be agitated, and will at length find that there is nowhere rest, except the mind recumbs on God's grace alone. We now understand the import of this clause. ^{f25}

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

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

Now many confine the first part to Nebuchadnezzar, but this is not suitable. The Prophet indeed speaks to the end of the chapter of Babylon and its ruin; but here he makes a distinction between the children of God, who cast all their cares on him, and the unbelieving, who cannot go forth beyond the world, where they seek to be made secure, and gather hence their defences in which they confide. And this is especially worthy of being observed, for it helps us much to understand the meaning of the Prophet; if this part — “Behold the proud, his soul is not right in him,” be applied to Nebuchadnezzar, the other part will lose much of its import; but if we consider that the Prophet, as it were, in these two tablets, shows what it is to glory in our own powers or in earthly aids, then what it is to repose on God alone will appear much more clear, and this truth will with more force penetrate into our minds; for we know how much such comparisons illustrate a subject which would be otherwise obscure or less evident. For if the Prophet had only declared that our faith is the cause of life and salvation, it might indeed be understood; but as we are disposed to entertain worldly hopes, the former truth would not have been sufficient to correct this evil, and to free our minds from all vain confidence. But when he affirms that all the unbelieving are deceived, while they fortify or elate themselves, because God will ever confound them, and that though no one disturbs them outwardly, they will yet be their own tormentors, as they have nothing that is right, nothing that is certain; when therefore all this is said to us, it is as though God drew us forcibly to himself, while seeing us deluded by the allurements of Satan, and seeing us too inclined to be taken with deceptions, which would at length lead us to destruction.

We now, then, perceive why Habakkuk has put these two things in opposition the one to the other — that the defences of this world are not

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

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

certainly does not confine this life to so narrow limits, that God will only defend us for a day or two, or for a few years; but he proceeds much farther, and says, that we shall be made really and truly happy; for though this whole world may perish or be exposed to various changes, yet the faithful shall continue in permanent and real safety. Hence, when Habakkuk promises life in future to the faithful, he no doubt overleaps the boundaries of this world, and sets before the faithful a better life than that which they have here, which is accompanied with many sorrows, and proves itself by its shortness to be unworthy of being much desired.

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

Quoting this place in ^{<450117>}Romans 1:17, he says that the righteousness of God is in the gospel revealed from faith to faith, and then adds,

“As it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

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

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

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

If then faith alone obtains grace, the law must necessarily be relinquished, as the apostle also explains more clearly in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians ^{<480311>}Galatians 3:11:

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

Paul assumes that these, even faith and law, are contrary, the one to the other; contrary as to the work of justifying. The law indeed agrees with the gospel; nay, it contains in itself the gospel. And Paul has solved this question in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, ^{<450101>} Romans 1:1-32 by saying, that the law cannot assist us to attain righteousness, but that it is offered to us in the gospel, and that it receives a testimony from the law and the Prophets. Though then there is a complete concord between the law and the gospel, as God, who is not inconsistent with himself, is the author of both; yet as to justification, the law accords not with the gospel, any more than light with darkness: for the law promises life to those who serve God; and the promise is conditional, dependent on the merits of works. The gospel also does indeed promise righteousness under condition; but it has no respect to the merits of works. What then? It is only this, that they who are condemned and lost are to embrace the favor offered to them in Christ.

We now then see how, by the testimony of our Prophet, Paul rightly confirms his own doctrine, that eternal salvation is to be attained by faith only; for we are destitute of all merits by works, and are constrained to stand naked and needy before God; and then the Lord justifies us freely.

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

men may try to do of themselves, is an abomination before God. This is one thing.

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

But we object and say, that the faithful, after having been regenerated by the Spirit of God, do not fulfill the law: they allow this to be true, but say that they might if they would, for that God has commanded nothing which is above what men are capable of doing. And this also is a most pernicious error. They are at the same time forced to confess, that experience itself teaches us that no man is wholly free from sin: then some guilt always remains. But they say, that if we kept half the law, we could obtain righteousness by that half. Hence, if one by adultery offended God and thus becomes exposed to eternal death, and yet abstains from theft, he is just, they say, because he is no thief. He is an adulterer, it is true; but he is yet just in part, because he keeps a part of the law; and they call this partial righteousness. But God has not promised salvation to men, except

they fully and really fulfill whatever he has commanded in his law. For it is not said, “He that fulfill a part of the law shall live;” but he who shall do these things shall live in them. Moses does not point out two or three commandments, but includes the whole law (<031805> Leviticus 18:5.) There is also a declaration made by James,

‘He who has forbidden to commit adultery, has also forbidden to steal: whosoever then transgresses the law in one particular, is a transgressor of the whole law’ (<590208> James 2:8,11):

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

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

They go astray still more grievously as to the remission of sins; for as it is well known, they obtrude their own satisfactions, and thus seek to expiate the sins of men by their own merits, as though the sacrifice of Christ was not sufficient for that purpose. Hence it is that they will not allow that we are gratuitously justified by faith; for they cannot be brought to acknowledge a free remission of sins; and except the remission of sins be gratuitous, we must confess that righteousness is not by faith alone, but also by merits. But the whole Scripture proves that expiation is nowhere else to be sought, except through the sacrifice of Christ alone. This error, then, of the Papists is extremely gross and false. They further err in pleading for the merits of works; for they boast of their own inventions, the works of supererogation, or as they call them, satisfactions. And these

meritorious works, under the Papacy, are gross errors and worthless superstitions, and yet they toil in them and lacerate themselves, nay, they almost wear out themselves. If they mutter many short prayers, if they run to altars and to various churches, if they buy masses, in a word, if they accumulate all these fictitious acts of worship, they think that they merit righteousness before God. Thus they forget their own saying, that righteousness is by covenant; for if it be by covenant, it is certain that God does not promise it to fictitious works, which men of themselves invent and contrive. It then follows, that what men bring to God, devised by themselves, cannot do anything towards the attainment of righteousness.

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

As, then, the Papists are blind to all these things, it is no wonder that they with so much hostility contend with us about righteousness, and can by no means allow that the righteousness of faith is gratuitous, for from the beginning this figment about free-will has been resorted to — “if men of themselves come to God, then they are not freely justified.” They, then, as I have said, imagine a partial righteousness, they suppose the deficiency to be made up by satisfactions, they have also, as they say, their devotions, that is, their own contrived modes of worship. Thus it comes, that they ever persuade themselves that the righteousness of man, at least in part, is made up by himself or by works. They indeed allow that we are justified by faith, but when it is added, by faith alone, then they begin to be furious; but they consider not that righteousness, if obtained by faith, cannot be by

works, for Paul, as I have shown above, reasons from the contrary, when he says, that righteousness, if it be by the works of the law, is not by faith, for faith, as it has been said, strips man of everything, that he may seek of God what he needs. But the Papists, though they think that man has not enough for himself, do not yet acknowledge that he is so needy and miserable, that righteousness must be sought in God alone. But yet sufficiently clear is the doctrine of Paul, and if Paul had never spoken, reason itself is sufficient to convince us that men cannot be justified by faith until they cast away every confidence in their own works, for if righteousness be of faith, then it is of grace alone, and if by grace alone, then it cannot be by works. It is wholly puerile in the Papists to think, that it is partly by grace and partly by the merits of works; for as salvation cannot be divided, so righteousness cannot be divided, by which we attain salvation itself. As, then, faith acquires for us favor before God, and by this favor we are counted just, so all works must necessarily fall to the ground, when righteousness is ascribed to faith.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as the corruption of our flesh ever leads us to pride and vain confidence, we may be illuminated by thy word, so as to understand how great and how grievous is our poverty, and be thus taught wholly to deny ourselves, and so to present ourselves naked before thee, that we may not hope for righteousness or for salvation from any other source than from thy mercy alone, nor seek any rest but only in Christ; and may we cleave to thee by the sacred and inviolable bond of faith, that we may boldly despise all those empty boastings by which the ungodly exult over us, and that we may also so cast ourselves down in true humility, that thereby we may be carried upward above all heavens, and become partakers of that eternal life which thine only begotten Son has purchased for us by his own blood. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND ELEVENTH

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

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

We now then see how suitably Paul joins righteousness with life, and adduces the Prophet's testimony to prove gratuitous justification, who affirms that we are to live by faith. But it is no wonder that the Papists go in so many ways astray in this instance, for they even differ with us in the meaning of the word faith. Hence it is that they so obstinately deny that we are justified by faith alone. They are forced, as we have said yesterday, to admit the righteousness of faith; but the exclusive particle they cannot

endure; for they imagine that it is a moulded faith that justifies, and this moulded or formed faith is piety, or the fear of God. And by calling faith unformed they seem to think that we can embrace the promises of God without the fruit of regeneration, which is very absurd, as though faith were not the peculiar gift of the Spirit, and a pledge of our adoption. But these are principles of which the Papists are wholly ignorant; for they are given up to a reprobate mind, so that they stumble at the very first elements of religion.

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

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

who are now endued with the true fear of God, live by faith; and thus refuted is the romance about initial justification. Let us now then proceed -

<350205> **HABAKKUK 2:5**

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

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

The Prophet has taught us that a tranquil state of mind cannot be otherwise had than by recumbent on the grace of God alone; and that they who elate themselves, and fly in the air, and feed on the wind, procure for themselves many sorrows and inquietudes. But he now comes to the king of Babylon, and also to his kingdom; for in my judgement he speaks not only of the king, but includes also that tyrannical empire with its people, and represents them as a great company of robbers. He then says in short, that though the Babylonians, like drunken men, hurried here and there without any control, yet God's vengeance, by which they were to be brought to nothing, was nigh at hand. What ever therefore the Prophet subjoins to the end of the chapter tends to confirm his doctrine, which we have already explained — that the just shall live by faith. We cannot indeed be fully convinced of this except we hold firmly this principle — that God cares for us, and that the whole world is governed by his providence; so that it cannot be but that he will at length check the wicked, and punish their sins, and deliver the innocent who call upon him. Unless this be our conviction, there can be no benefit derived from our faith; we might indeed be a hundred times deceived; for experience teaches us that the hopes of men, as long as they are fixed on the earth, are vain and delusive, as they are only mere imaginations. Except then God governs the world there is no salvation to the faithful; for God in that case would delude them with vain promises, and they would flatter themselves with an empty prospect, or

hope for that which is not. Hence the Prophet shows how it is that the just shall live by faith; and that is because the Lord will defend all who call upon him, and that inasmuch as he is the just Judge of all the world, he will finally execute judgement on all the wicked, though for a time they act wantonly, and think that they shall escape punishment, because God does not execute upon them immediate vengeance. We now perceive the design of the Prophet.

As to the words, these two particles, אִי כִי, *aph ki*, when joined together, amplify the meaning; and some render them — “how much more;” others take them as a simple affirmative, and render them “truly.” I approve of a middle course, and render them “yea, truly;” (*Etiam certe;*) and they are so taken as I think, in ^{<010301>}Genesis 3:1, Satan thus asked the woman — yea, truly! *Est-ce pour vrai?* for the question is that of one doubting, and yet it refers to what is certain, — “How comes it that God should interdict the eating of the fruit? yea, is it so truly? can it be so? So it is in this place, *yea, truly*, says the Prophet. That it is an amplification may be gathered from the context. He had said before that they who elevate themselves, or seem to themselves to be well fortified, are fearful in their minds, and driven backwards and forwards. He now advances another step — that when men are borne along by unrestrained wantonness, and promise themselves all things, as though there was no God, they surpass even the drunken, being hurried on by blind cupidity. When therefore men thus abandon themselves, can they escape the judgement of God? Far less bearable is such a madness than that simple arrogance of which he had spoken in the last verse. Thus then are the two verses connected together, — “Yea, truly, he who in his pride is like a drunken man, and restrains not himself, and who is even like to wild beasts or to the grave, devouring whatever meets them — he surely will not at length be endured by God.” Vengeance, then, is nigh to all the proud, who are cruelly furious, passing all bounds and without any fear.

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

version — “Man addicted to wine or to drunkenness transgresses;” and then they add — “a proud man will not inhabit;” but they pervert the sentence, and mangle the words of the Prophet; for his words are — *By wine transgressing the proud man*: he does not say that a man addicted to wine transgresses; but he compares the proud to drunken men, who, forgetting all reason and shame, abandon themselves unto all that is disgraceful; for the drunken distinguishes nothing, and becomes like a brute animal, so that he shuns nothing that is base and unbecoming. This is the reason why the Prophet compares proud men to the drunken, who transgress through wine, that is, who observe no moderation, but indulge themselves in excesses. We now then understand the real meaning of the Prophet, which many have not perceived. ^{f26}

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

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

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

<350206> HABAKKUK 2:6

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

6. Annon ipsi omnes super eum parabolam (*vel* apophthegma) tollent? et dicerium aenigmaticum (*vel* aenigmatum; *alii* [מַלְיָצָה] *vertunt* interpretationem; *sed dicemus de vocibus*) ei (*vel* super eum,) et dicet, Vae qui multiplicat non sua (*vel* ex non suis, *qui sese locupletat ex alieno*); quousque? et qui accumulatur (*vel* aggravatur) super se densum lutum.

Now at length the Prophet denounces punishment on the Babylonian king and the Chaldeans; for the Lord would render them a sport to all. But some think that a punishment is also expressed in the preceding verse, such as awaits violent robbers, who devour the whole world. But I, on the

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

With regard to the words, **משל**, *meshil* is a short saying or a pithy sentence, and worthy to be remembered, as we have noticed elsewhere. Some render it parable. As to the word **מליצה**, *melitse*, it probably signifies a scoff or a taunt, by which any one is reproved; for it comes from **לויץ**, *luts*, which means to laugh at one or to deride him. It is indeed true, that the Hebrews call a rhetorician or an interpreter **מליץ**, *melits*; and hence some render **מליצה**, *melitse*, interpretation; but it is not suitable to this passage; for the Prophet speaks here of taunts that would be cast against the king of Babylon. For as he had as with an open mouth swallowed up all, so also all would eagerly prick him with their goads, and disdainfully deride him. The word he afterwards adds **חידות**, *chidut*, is to be read, I have no doubt, in the genitive case.^{f27} I therefore do not approve of adding a copulative, as many do, and read thus — “a taunt and an enigma.” This word comes from the verb **חוד**, *chud*, which is to speak enigmatically; hence **חידות**, *chidut*, are enigmas, or metaphors, or obscure sentences; and we know that when we wish to touch a man to the quick, there is more sharpness when we use an obscure word, which contains a metaphor or ambiguity, or something of this kind. It is not therefore without reason that the Prophet calls taunts, enigmas, **חידות**, *chidut*, that is, obscure words, which bite or prick men sharply, as it were with goads. Hence in all scoffs a figurative language ought to be used; and except the expression be ambiguous or alliterative, or, in short, contain such metaphors as it is not necessary to recite here, there would be in it no beauty, no aptness. When therefore men wish to form biting taunts, they

obscure what might be plainly said by some indirect metaphor; and this is the reason why the Prophet speaks here of a taunt that is enigmatical, for it is on that account more severe.

And he shall say. There is a change of number in this verb, but it does not obscure the sense. ^{f28} The particle ׀׀ may be rendered “woe”; or it may be an exclamation, as when one is attracted by some particular sight, *caca or sus*; and so it is taken often by the Hebrews, and the context seems to favor this meaning, for “woe” would be frigid. When the Prophets pronounce a curse on the wicked, it is no doubt a dreadful threat; but what is found here is a taunt, by which the whole world would deride those haughty tyrants who thought that they ought to have been worshipped as gods. He! they say, where is he who *multiplies himself by what belongs to another?* and then, *How long* is this to be? even *such accumulate on themselves thick clay*; that is, they sink themselves in deep caverns, and heap on themselves mountains, by which they become overwhelmed. We now understand the meaning of the Prophet’s words.

What seems here to be the singing of triumph before the victory is no matter of wonder; for our faith, as it is well known, depends not on the judgement of the flesh, nor regards what is openly evident; but it is a vision of hidden things, as it is called in ^{<581101>} Hebrews 11:1, and the substance of things not seen. As then the firmness of faith is the same, though what it apprehends is remote, and as faith ceases not to see things hidden, — for through the mirror of God’s word it ascends above heaven and earth, and penetrates into the spiritual kingdom of God, — as faith, then, possesses a view so distant, it is not to be wondered that the Prophet here boldly triumphs over the Babylonians, and now prescribes a derisive song for all nations, that the proud, who had previously with so much cruelty exalted themselves, might be scoffed at and derided.

But were any to ask, whether it be right to assail even the wicked with scoffs and railleries, the question is unsuitable here; for the Prophet does not here refer to what is lawful for the faithful to do, but speaks only of what is commonly done by men: and we know that it is almost natural to men, that when those whom they had feared and dared not to blame as long as they were in power, are overthrown, they break forth against them not only with many complaints and accusations, but also with wanton rudeness. As, then, it usually happens, that all triumph over fallen tyrants,

and throw forth their taunts, and all seek in this way to bite, the Prophet describes this regular course of things. It is not, however, to be doubted, but that he composed this song according to the nature of the case, when he says, that they were men who multiplied their own by what belonged to others; that is, that they gathered the wealth of others. It is indeed true, that many things are commonly spread abroad, for which there is no reason nor justice; but as some principles of equity and justice remain in the hearts of men, the consent of all nations is as it were the voice of nature, or the testimony of that equity which is engraven on the hearts of men, and which they can never obliterate. Such is the reason for this saying; for Habakkuk, by introducing the people as the speakers, propounded, as it were, the common law of nature, in which all agree; and that is, — that whosoever enriches himself by another's wealth, shall at length fall, and that when one accumulates great riches, these will become like a heap to cover and overwhelm him. And if any one of us will consult his own mind, he will find that this is engraven on his very nature.

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

Then follow the words, **עַד־מַתַּי**, *od-mati*, *how long?* This also is the dictate of nature; that is, that an end will some time be to unjust plunders, though God may not immediately check plunderers and wicked men, who proceed and effect their purposes by force and slaughters, and frauds and evil-doings. In the mean time the Prophet also intimates, that tyrants and their cruelty cannot be endured without great weariness and sorrow; for indignity on account of evil deeds kindles within the breasts of all, so that they become wearied when they see that wicked men are not soon restrained. Hence almost the whole world sound forth these words, How long, how long? When any one disturbs the whole world by his ambition and avarice, or everywhere commits plunders, or oppresses miserable nations, — when he distresses the innocent, all cry out, How long? And this cry, proceeding as it does from the feeling of nature and the dictate of

justice, is at length heard by the Lord. For how comes it that all, being touched with weariness, cry out, How long? except that they know that this confusion of order and justice is not to be endured? And this feeling, is it not implanted in us by the Lord? It is then the same as though God heard himself, when he hears the cries and greenings of those who cannot bear injustice.

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

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

what the Prophet says here, — that all the wealth of this world is nothing else but a heap of clay, as when any one puts himself of his own accord under a great heap which he had collected together.

Some refer this to the walls of Babylon, which were built of baked bricks, as it is well known; but this is too farfetched. Others think that the Prophet speaks of the last end of us all; for they who possess the greatest riches, being at last thrown into the grave, are covered with earth: but this also is not suitable here, any more than when they apply it to Nebuchadnezzar, that is, to that sottishness by which he had inebriated himself almost through his whole life; or when others apply it to Belshazzar, his grandson, because when he drank from the sacred vessels of the temple, he uttered slanders and blasphemies against God. These explanations are by no means suitable; for the Prophet does not here speak of the person of the king alone, but, as it has been said, he, on the contrary, summons to judgement the whole nation, which had given itself up to plunders and frauds and other evil deeds.

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

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou deignest so far to condescend as to sustain the care of this life, and to supply us with whatever is needful for our pilgrimage — O grant that we may learn to rely on thee, and so to trust to thy blessing, as to abstain not only from all

plunder and other evil deeds, but also from every unlawful coveting; and to continue in thy fear, and so to learn also to bear our poverty on the earth, that being content with those spiritual riches which thou offerest to us in thy gospel, and of which thou makes us now partakers, we may ever cheerfully aspire after that fullness of all blessings which we shall enjoy when at length we shall reach the celestial kingdom, and be perfectly united to thee, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND TWELFTH

<350207> HABAKKUK 2:7

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

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

THE Prophet proceeds with the subject which we have already begun to explain; for he introduces here the common taunts against the king of Babylon and the whole tyrannical empire, by which many nations had been cruelly oppressed. He therefore says that enemies, who should *bite him*,^{f29} would suddenly and unexpectedly *rise up*. Some expound this of worms, but not rightly: for God not only inflicted punishment on the king when dead, but he intended also that there should be on earth an evident and a memorable proof of his vengeance on the Babylonians, by which it might be made known to all that their cruelty could not be suffered to go unpunished.

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

<350208> HABAKKUK 2:8

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

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

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

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

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

He then adds, *on account of man’s blood*; that is, because thou hast shed innocent blood, and because thou hast committed many plunders; for thou hast not only injured a few men, but thy daringness and cruelty have also extended to many nations. He indeed mentions the *earth*, and also the *city*. Some confine these words to the land of Judea and to Jerusalem, but not rightly; for the Prophet speaks here generally; and to the land, he joins cities and their inhabitants.^{f30}

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

they have devised against others, as we shall presently see again. He now adds —

<350209> **HABAKKUK 2:9**

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

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

Habakkuk proceeds in exciting the king of Babylon by taunts; which were not scurrilous jests, but contained serious threatening; for, as it has been already said, the Prophet here introduces indeed the common people, but in that multitude we are to recognize the innumerable heralds of God's vengeance: and hence he says, *Woe to him who coveteth*, etc.; or we may say, He! for it is a particle of exclamation, as it has been said: He! thou, he says, who covetest an evil covetousness to thy house, and settest on high thy nest: but what shall happen? The next verse declares the punishment.

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

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

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

<350210> HABAKKUK 2:10	
10. Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul.	10. Consultasti in ignominiam domui tuae (vel, conflasti tuo consilio probrum et dedecus domui tuae) exidendo populos multos; et peccasti in animam tuam.

The Prophet again confirms the truth, that those who count themselves happy, imagining that they are like God, busy themselves in vain; for God

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

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

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

To the same purpose is what he adds, *thou hast sinned against thy soul*. Some give this version, “Thou hast sinned licentiously” or immoderately; others, “Thy soul has sinned,” but these pervert the Prophet’s meaning; for what he intended was nothing else but the evils which the avaricious and the cruel bring on themselves, and which will return on their own heads. When therefore the Babylonians contrived ruin for the whole world, the Prophet predicts that an end, very different from what they thought, would be to them: *thou hast sinned*, he says, *against thine own soul*; ^{f31} that is, the evil which thou didst prepare to bring on others, shall be made by God to fall on thine own head.

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

<350211> HABAKKUK 2:11-13	
11. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.	11. Quia lapis ex muro clamabit, et lignum ex tabulato (ad verbum est, ex ligno,) respondebit ei.
12. Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!	12. Vae aedificanti urbem in sanguinibus, et paranti civitatem in iniquitate.
13. Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labor in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?	13. Annon ecce a Jehova exercituum? ideo laborabunt populi in igne et gentes in vanitate (hoc est, frustra fatigabuntur.)

There is here introduced by the Prophet a new personification. He had before prepared a common song, which would be in the mouth of all. He now ascribes speech to stones and wood, of which buildings are formed. *The stone, he says, shall cry from the wall, and the wood from the chamber;*

that is, there is no part of the building that will not cry out that it was built by plunder, by cruelty, and, in a word, by evil deeds. The Prophet not only ascribes speech to wood and stone, but he makes them also respond one to the other as in a chorus, as in lyrics there are voices which take up the song in turns. *The stone, he says, shall cry from the wall, and the wood shall respond to it from the chamber;*^{f32} as though he said, “There will be a striking harmony in every part of the building; for the wall will begin and will utter its song, ‘Behold I have been built by blood and by iniquity;’ and the wood will utter the same, and will cry, ‘Woe;’ but all in due order; there will be no confused noise, but as music has distinct sounds, so also the stones will respond to the wood and the wood to the stones, so that there may be, as they say, corresponding voices.”

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

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

voice of God himself, and let the wood also cry out in its turn.” This, then, is the reason why the Prophet introduces here mute things as the speakers, even to awaken our insensibility.

Then he adds, *Shall it not be, behold, from Jehovah of hosts?*^{f33} Some give a wrong version, “Is not this,” as though הנה, *ene*, were put here instead of a pronoun demonstrative; but they extenuate and obscure the beauty of the expression; nay, they pervert the meaning of the Prophet: for when he says, הנה, *ene*, behold, he refers not to what he had said, nor specifies any particular thing, and yet he shows, as it were by the finger, the judgement of God, which he bids us to expect; as though he said, “Shall not God at length have his turn, when the avaricious and the cruel have obtained their triumphs in the world, and darkened the minds and thoughts of all, as though no account were to be given by them before the tribunal of God? Shall not God sometime show that it is his time to interpose?” When, therefore, he says, *Shall it not be, behold, from Jehovah?* it is an indefinite mode of speaking; he does not say, This or that shall be from the God of hosts; but, *Shall it not be, behold, from Jehovah of hosts?* that is, God seems now indeed to rest, and on this account men indulge themselves with greater boldness; but he will not always remain still, Shall not God then come forth, who seems now to be unconcerned? Something there will at length be from the God of hosts. And the demonstrative particle confirms the same thing: *Behold*, he says, as though he would show to the faithful as in a picture the tribunal of God, which cannot be seen by us now but by faith. He says, *Behold, will not there be something* from the God of *hosts?* that is, Will not God at length stretch forth his hand, to show that he is not unconcerned, but that he cares for the affairs of men? In a word, by this mode of speaking is pointed out to us the change, which we are to hope for, inasmuch as it cannot be soon realised.

Hence he concludes, *The people*, then, *labor in the fire, and the people weary themselves in vain*. To labor in the fire means the same thing as to take in hand an unprofitable work, the fruit of which is immediately consumed. Some say that people labor in the fire, because Babylon had been built by a great number of men, and at length perished by fire; but this explanation seems far-fetched. I take a simpler view — that *people labor in the fire*, like him who performs a work, and a fire is put under it and consumes it; or like him, who with great labor polishes his own work, and a fire is prepared, which destroys it while in the hands of the artificers. For

it is certain that the Prophet repeats the same thing in another form, when he says, בְּדִירִיק, *bedi-rik*, with vanity, or for vanity. We now then apprehend his object.

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

<350214> **HABAKKUK 2:14**

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

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

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

acknowledge that the world is governed by God's providence, as it had been once created by him.

We now understand the Prophet's meaning, and why he says, that the earth would be filled with the knowledge of God's glory; for the glory of God previously disappeared from the world, with regard to the perceptions of men; but it shone forth again, when God himself had erected his tribunal by overthrowing Babylon, and thereby proved that there is no power among men which he cannot control. We have the same sentence in <231109> Isaiah 11:9.^{f34} The Prophet there speaks indeed of the kingdom of Christ; for when Christ was openly made known to the world, the knowledge of God's glory at the same time filled the earth; for God then appeared in his own living image. But yet our Prophet uses a proper language, when he says that the earth shall then be filled with the knowledge of God's glory, when he should execute vengeance on the Babylonians. Hence incorrectly have some applied this to the preaching of the gospel, as though Habakkuk made a transition from the ruin of Babylon to the general judgement: this is a strained exposition. It is indeed a well-known mode of speaking, and often occurs in the Psalms, that the power, grace, and truth of God are made known through the world, when he delivers his people and restrains the ungodly. The same mode the Prophet now adopts; and he compares this fullness of knowledge to the waters of the sea, because the sea, as we know, is so deep, that there is no measuring of its waters. So Habakkuk intimates, that the glory of God would be so much known that it would not only fill the world, but in a manner overflow it: as the waters of the sea by their vast quantity cover the deep, so the glory of God would fill heaven and earth, so as to have no limits. If, at the same time, there be a wish to extend this sentence to the coming of Christ, I do not object: for we know that the grace of redemption flowed in a perpetual stream until Christ appeared in the world. But the Prophet, I have no doubt, sets forth here the greatness of God's power in the destruction of Babylon.^{f35}

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are so inclined to do wrong, that every one is naturally disposed to consider his own private advantage — O grant that we may confine ourselves by that restraint which thou layest on us by thy Prophets, so that we may

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

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTEENTH

<350215> HABAKKUK 2:15, 16	
<p>15. Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!</p>	<p>15. Vae qui potat socium suum (vel, amicum;) conjungis (conjungens) calorem tuum (vel, utrem tuum; alii vertunt, adhibes venenum tuum, vel, iram tuam; alii intendens iram;) atque etiam inebrias, ut aspicias super nuditates eorum (id est, verenda.)</p>
<p>16. Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the LORD’S right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory.</p>	<p>16. Saturatus es ignominia ex gloria (vel, pro gloria;) bibe etiam tu et discooperire (vel, sopiaries;) fundetur super te calix dexteræ Jehovæ, et vomitus ignominia super gloriam tuam.</p>

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

shall say something as to the words; for the meaning of the Prophet will thereby be made more evident.

Woe, he says, *to him who gives his friend drink*; then he adds, חמתך מספח, *mesephech chemetak*, “who joinest and bottle.” חמה, *cheme*, is taken in Hebrew for a bottle; and we know, and it is sufficiently evident from Scripture, that the Jews used bottles of skin, as there are casks and larger vessels with us. Since, then, they put their wine into bottles, these were often taken for their cups, as it is in our language, when one says, *Des flacons, des bouteilles*. Hence some give this explanation — that the king of Babylon brought forth his flagons, that he might force to intoxication, by excessive drinking, those who could not and dared not to resist his will. But others render חמה, *cheme*, wrath, with a preposition understood: and in order that nothing may be understood, some render the participle, מספח, “displaying,” that is, “his fury.” But as חמה, *cheme*, means to be hot, we may, therefore, properly give this version, “Uniting thy heat;” that is, “It is not enough for thee to inebriate others, except thou implicates them with thyself.” We now perceive the meaning of this phrase. He adds, *And thou also dost inebriate*. We may hence learn that the Prophet had no other thing in view, but to show that the king of Babylon sought for himself many associates in his intemperance or excess: at the same time he takes, as I have said, excess in a metaphorical sense. I shall presently explain more fully what all this means; but now we only expound the words. *And thou*, he says, *dost also inebriate*: the particle אף, as it is well known, is laid down for the sake of amplifying. After having said, *Thou unitest thy heat*; that is, thou exhales thine intemperance, so that others also contract the same heat with thyself, he immediately adds, *Thou inebriatest them*. It follows, *that their nakedness may be made open*; that is, that they may disclose themselves with shame. The following verse I shall defer until we shall see more clearly what the Prophet had in view. ^{f36}

As I have already said the Prophet charges the Babylonian king with having implicated neighboring kings in his own evil desires, and with having in a manner inebriated them. He indeed compares the insatiable avarice of that king to intemperance; for as it is the object of drunken men not to drink what may suffice them, but to glut themselves with wine, so also when avarice is dominant in the hearts of men, they are seized with a certain kind of fury, like a person who has an immoderate love for wine.

This is the reason for the metaphor; for the Babylonian king, when he thirsted for the blood of men, and also for wealth and kingdoms, led into the same kind of madness many other kings; for he could not have succeeded except he had allured the favor of many others, and deceived them with vain expectations. As a person who gives himself up to drinking wishes to leave associates, so Habakkuk lays the same thing to the charge of the king of Babylon; for being himself addicted to insatiable avarice, he procured associates to be as it were his guests, and quaffed wine to them, that is, elicited their cupidity, that they might join him in his wars; for each hoped for a part of the spoil after victory. Since, then, he had thus blinded many kings, they are said to have been inebriated by him. We indeed know that such allurements infatuate the minds and hearts of men; for there is no intoxication that stultifies men more than that eager appetite by which they devour both lands and seas.

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

And this metaphor ought to be carefully observed; for we see at this day as in a mirror what the Prophet teaches here. For all the great princes, when they devise any plans of their own, send their ambassadors here and there, and seek to involve with themselves other cities and princes; and as no one is willing to endanger himself without reason, they set forth many fallacious allurements. And when any city fears a neighboring prince, it will seek to fortify itself by a new protection; so a treaty, when offered, becomes like a snare to it. And then when any inferior prince wishes to enlarge his borders, or to revenge himself, he willingly puts on arms, nay, anxiously, that he may be able, by the help of a greater, to effect his purpose, which he could not otherwise accomplish. Thus we see that dukes and counts, as they are called, and free cities, are daily inebriated. They who are chief kings, abounding in wine, that is, full of many vain promises, give to drink, as it were with full flagons, bidding wine to be brought forth on a well furnished table — “I will make thine enemy to give way to thee, and thou shalt compel him according to thy wish, and when I

shall obtain the victory a part of the spoil shall be allotted to thee; I desire nothing but the glory. With regard to you, the free cities, see, ye tremble continually; now if you lie under my shadow, it will be the best security for you.” Such quaffing is to be found at this day almost throughout the whole of Europe.

Then the Prophet does not without reason commemorate this vice in the king of Babylon — that he made those associates drunk whom he had bound to himself by perfidious treaties; for as it has been said, there is no intoxication so dangerous as this madness; that is, when any one promises this or that to himself, and imagines what does not exist. Hence he not only says, that the Babylonian king gave drink to his friends, but also that he *joined his bottles*; as though he had said that he was very liberal, nay, prodigal, while seeking associates in his intemperance; for if one condition did not suffice, another was added — “Behold, my king is prepared; but if he is not enough another will be joined with him.” They thus then join together their heat. If we take **חֶמֶה**, *cheme*, for a bottle, then to join together their bottles would mean, that they accumulated promises until they inebriated those whom they sought to deceive. But if the other interpretation be more approved, which I am disposed to follow, then the meaning would be — *They join together their own heat*, that is, they implicate others with themselves; as they burn themselves with insatiable cupidity, so they spread this ardor far and wide, so that the desires of many become united.

He afterwards adds — *that thou mayest see their nakedness*. It was not indeed an object to the king of Babylon to disclose the reproach of all those whom he had induced to take part in his wars; but we know that great kings are wont to neglect their friends, to whom at first they promise every thing. When a king wishes to entice to himself a free city or an inferior prince, he will say — “See, I seek nothing but to be thy friend”. We indeed see how shamefully they perjure themselves; nor is it enough for them to utter these perjuries in their courts; but not many years pass away before our great kings make public their abominable perjuries; and it appears immediately afterwards that they thus seek, without any shame, to mock both God and all mankind. After testifying that they seek nothing except to defend by their protection what is right and just, and to resist the tyranny and pride of others, they immediately draw back when anything adverse afterwards happens, and the city, which had hoped everything

from so liberal a king, is afterwards forced to submit and to agree with its enemies, and to manage matters anyhow; thus its *nakedness is disclosed*. In the same manner also are inferior princes deprived of their power. And to whom is this to be imputed but to the principal author? For when any one, for the sake of ambition or avarice, leads others to inconvenience or to damage, he may justly and correctly be said to disclose their nakedness. We now apprehend the Prophet's real meaning, which interpreters have not understood. I come now to the next verse —

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

certainty; and we know that this was a common mode of speaking with the Prophets. ^{f37}

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

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

Then follows the explanation — *Poured forth* ^{f38} *into thee shall be the cup of Jehovah’s right hand*; that is, “the Lord shall in his time be thy cup-bearer; as thou hast inebriated many nations, and under the pretense of friendship hast defrauded those who, being bound to thee by treaties, have been ruined; so the Lord will now recompense thee with the reward which thou hast deserved: As thou hast been a cup-bearer to others, so the Lord will now become thy cup-bearer, and will inebriate thee, but after another manner.” We indeed know what the Scripture everywhere means by the cup of God’s hand — even vengeance of every kind. God strikes some with giddiness and precipitates them, when deprived of all humanity, into a state of madness; others he infatuates by insensibility; some he deprives of all understanding, so that they perceive nothing aright; against others he rouses up enemies, who treat them with cruelty. Hence the Lord is said to extend his cup to the wicked whenever he takes vengeance on them.

Therefore he adds — *the reproach of spewing shall be on thy glory*. The word קִיְקֹלֹן, *kikolun*, is a compound.^{f39} We have already seen that קְלוֹב, *kolun*, is shame; and now he speaks of shameful spewing. And this may be referred to the king of Babylon — that he himself would shamefully spew out what he had before intemperately swallowed down; or it might be fitly applied to his enemies — that they would spew in the face of the king of Babylon.

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

<350217> **HABAKKUK 2:17**

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

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

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

this discourse is properly addressed to the Jews; for he intended to bring them some consolation in their extreme evils, so that they might strengthen their patience; for they were thereby made to see that the wrongs done to them were come to a reckoning before God.

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

Then come the words, *the pillaging of beasts*. Interpreters think that the Chaldeans and Assyrians are here called **בהמות**, *bemutt*, beasts, as they had been savage and cruel, like wild beasts, in laying waste Judea; but I rather understand by the beasts of Libanus those which inhabited that forest. The Prophet exaggerates the cruelty of the king of Babylon by this consideration, that he had been an enemy to brute beasts; and I consider the pronoun relative **אשר**, *asher*, which, to be understood before the verb **יחיתן**, *ichiten*, which may be taken to mean, to tear, or to frighten, Some give this rendering, “The plundering of beasts shall tear them;” as though he had said, “The Babylonians are indeed like savage beasts, but they shall be torn by their own plundering:” but another sense will be more suitable that the plundering of beasts, which terrified them, shall overwhelm thee; for the same verb, **יבס**, *icas*, shall cover or overwhelm the king of Babylon, is to be repeated here. He adds at last the clause, which was explained yesterday. We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet to be — that the king of Babylon would be justly plundered, because he had destroyed the holy land and iniquitously attacked God’s chosen people, and had also carried on his depredations through almost the whole of the Easter world. ^{f40} It now follows —

<350218> **HABAKKUK 2:18**

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

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

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

As then the king of Babylon did himself worship his own gods, the Prophet dissipates that vain confidence, by which he might be deceived and deceive others. Hence he says, *What avails the graven image?* He speaks here contemptuously of images formed by men’s hands. And he adds a reason, *because the maker has graven it*, he says. Interpreters give a sense that is very jejune, as though the Prophet had said, “What avails a graven image, when it is graven or melted by its artifices?” But the Prophet shows here the reason why the worship of idols is useless, and that is, because these gods are made of dead materials. And then he says, “What deity can the artifices produce?” We hence see that a reason is given in these words, and therefore we may more clearly render them thus — “What avails the graven image, when the framer has graven it?” that is, since the graven image has its origin from the hand and skill of man, what can it avail? He then adds, *he has formed a molten image*; that is, though the artifices has given form to the metal, or to the wood, or to the stone, yet he could not have changed its nature. He has indeed given it a certain external appearance; but were any one to ask what it is, the answer would surely be, “It is a graven image.” Since then its nature is not changed by the work of man, it evidently appears, how stupid and mad must all those be who put their trust in graven images. ^{f41}

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

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

<350219> HABAKKUK 2:19

19. Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is

19. Vae qui dicit ligno, Expergiscere; excitare, lapidi muto (mortuo,) ipse docebit:

laid over with gold and silver, and *there is no breath at all in the midst of it.*

Ecce, ipse (*vel ipsum lipsum, si vefaremus ad lignum*; ipse ergo) opertus est auro et argento; et nullus spiritus in medio ejus.

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

We hence see how the Prophet in this way amplifies the insensibility of men; for they did not perceive what was quite manifest. The design of what follows is the same. *Behold, it is covered over with gold and silver*; that is, it is made splendid: for idolaters think that their gods are better when adorned with gold and silver; but yet *there is no breath in the midst of them*. “Look,” he says, “within; look within, and ye shall see that they are dead.”^{f42} The rest we shall dilate on to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as there is in us so little of right judgement, and as our minds are blind even at mid-day, — O grant, that thy Spirit may always shine in us, and that being attentive to the light of thy word, we may also keep to the right way through the whole course of our pilgrimage, and subject to thee both ourselves and every action of our life, so that we may not be led by

any allurements into the same ruin with the ungodly, who would deceive and entrap us, and who lie in wait on every side; but that being ruled by the counsel of thy Spirit, we may beware of all their intrigues: and may we, especially as to our spiritual life, be so given up to thee alone, as ever to keep ourselves far away from the defilements of all people, and so remain in the pure worship of thy majesty, that the ungodly may never draw us away into the same delusions with themselves, by which Satan so mightily deceives them; but may we follow Him as our leader whom thou wouldst have to be our ruler, even Christ thy Son, until he at length gathers us all into that celestial kingdom which he has purchased for us by his own blood. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND FOURTEENTH

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

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

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

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

The Prophet, in the last place, derides the madness of men, by saying that the very idols teach: for, as it was said yesterday, the clause is not to be read as a question, as some do; but in order more sharply to reprove the stupidity of men, the Prophet says, "Doubtless the very figures

themselves, except ye are wholly senseless, will teach you.” He had before said, it is true, that they were the teachers of falsehood and vanity; but he speaks now of another kind of teaching, that if men wisely attended to the thing itself, they might soon learn from a mere view of their gods, that they were most palpably the deceits of Satan; for if any one looked on the idols with a clear eye, he would see that they were a dead material, and would see that great wrong is done to God by transforming him into a likeness of what is dead.

We now understand the Prophet’s meaning, when he says, That idols themselves are sufficient, and more than sufficient teachers, when men are teachable, and lend an attentive ear. He means not, as it was said yesterday, that idols teach fallaciously to the destruction of men, while something divine is ascribed to them; but he says that they teach, if any one of a sane mind, and free from error, comes to view the idol, and forms a judgement of the thing itself. But superstition occupies the minds of men; and hence it is that all become the scholars of Satan, and no one applies his mind to understand the doctrine he mentions here. In short, idols teach naturally, and they teach through the artifice and delusion of Satan. They teach naturally; for by their silence they show that they are not gods, inasmuch as there is no strength in them. They teach, also, by the artifice of the devil; for they are made to claim a kind of divinity, and thus dazzle the minds of men, who are already corrupted by their own delusions. To the first teaching, of which the Prophet now speaks, none apply their minds; for almost all renounce nature wholly: this only lays hold on them — that idols are gods; for they make an image of the heavenly and eternal God, from whom we are at a great distance, and who does not otherwise descend to us, except through visible representations!

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

Moreover, whatever is here said against idols, most certainly applies to the superstitions of popery. They deny that they give divine honors to their idols; but let us consider what the Prophet says. They indeed sacrifice to

gold and silver, and then bend their knees before their images, and do not think that God is near them, except in these figures. Let them show, then, that the Prophet reasons here foolishly, or let them be held guilty according to the declaration, as it were, of the Holy Spirit, when they thus present their prayers before idols. It now follows —

<350220> **HABAKKUK 2:20**

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

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

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

And we ought carefully to observe this order; for we see that many boldly deride all the superstitions which prevail in the world, and at the same time daringly and with cyclopic fury despise the true God. How many are at this day either Epicureans or Lucianians, who prate jestingly and scoffingly against the superstitions of the papacy, but in the meantime they are not influenced by any fear of God? If, however, we are to choose one of two evils, superstition is more tolerable than that gross impiety which obliterates every thought of a God. It is indeed true, that the more the superstitious toil in their delusions, the more they provoke God's wrath against them; for they transfer his glory to dead things; but yet they retain this principle — that honor and worship are due to God: but the profane, in whom there is no religion whatever, not only change God from what he is, but also strive as far as they can to reduce him to nothing. Hence I have said, that the order which the Prophet observes here ought to be maintained. For, after having overturned the false illusions of the devil, by which he deludes the superstitious, by setting before them a mere shadow in the place of the true God, he now sets up the true worship of

the only true God. Then the Prophet has hitherto been endeavoring to subvert superstitions, but he now builds up: for except God, when idols are pulled down, ascends his own tribunal, and shines there as supreme according to his right, it would be better, at least it would be more tolerable, as I have said, that superstitions should be left entire.

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

If any raises the objection that there is then no difference between the God of Israel and the gods of the Gentiles, for he also dwells in an earthly habitation, the answer is obviously this — that though God is said to dwell

between the cherubim, he has not been represented by an image, as though he had anything like to wood or stone, or possessed any likeness to human bodies. All these delusions were banished from the Temple; for he commanded his worshipers to look up to heaven. There was an intervening veil, that the people might understand that they could not otherwise come to God than through that celestial model, the and types of which they saw in the altar of incense, in the altar on which they sacrificed, in the table of the shewbread, in short, in all other services of the Temple. And there is another difference to be noticed; for though there was there the golden altar, though there was there the ark of the covenant, and the altar on which the victims were immolated, yet inscribed on all these typical representations was the word of God, by which alone true religion was to be distinguished from all false inventions. For whatever specious appearance of reason may therefore be in fictitious modes of worship, men have no authority to render them lawful; but so much reverence is due to the only true word of God, that it ought to overrule all other reasons. And besides, this word, as I have hinted already, did not retain the Jews in these delusions, but elevated their minds to heaven. We now then see that there was a wide difference between the Temple which was at Jerusalem, and the temples which the superstitious had then built for themselves throughout the world; for God ruled over the Jews, so that they could not have been deluded. And at this day, where the word of God shines among us, we can follow it with safety. And, further, God did spiritually draw to himself his own servants, though he employed, on account of their ignorance, certain outward elements. Hence the Prophet justly says, that God was in his palace or his Temple; for the Israelites knew of a certainty that they did not worship a fictitious God, since in his law he had revealed himself to them, and had chosen the sanctuary, where he intended to be worshipped in a typical, and yet in a spiritual manner.

He then adds, *Let all the earth be silent before him*. Habakkuk, no doubt, commends the power of God, that the Israelites might proceed with alacrity in their religious course, knowing it to be a sufficient security to be under the protection of the only true God, and that they might not seek after the superstitions of the nations, nor be carried here and there, as it often happens, by vain desires. *Keep silence*, then, he says, *let all the earth*. He shows that though the Israelites might be far inferior to the Babylonians and other nations, and be far unequal to them in strength,

military art, forces, and, in short, in all things of this kind, yet they would be always safe under the guardianship of God; for the Lord was able to control whatever power there might be in the world.

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

CHAPTER 3

<350301> HABAKKUK 3:1

1. A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.

1. Precatio Chabakuk Prophetæ super ignorantiiis (*vel*, super canticis, *aut* instrumentis musicis.)

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

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

He calls it his own prayer, ^{f43} not because he used it himself privately, or composed it for himself, but that the prayer might have some authority among the people; for they knew that a form of prayer dictated for them by the mouth of a Prophet, was the same as though the Spirit itself was to show them how they were to pray to God. The name, then, of Habakkuk is added to it, not because he used it himself, but that the people might be more encouraged to pray, when they knew that the Holy Spirit, through the Prophet, had become their guide and teacher.

There is some difficulty connected with the word שְׁגִיּוֹת, *sheginut*. The verb שָׁגַג, *shegag*, or שָׁגָה, *shege*, means, to act inconsiderately; and from

שגה, *shege*, is derived שגיון, *shegiun*. Many render it, ignorance; some, delight. Some think it to be the beginning of a song; others suppose it to be a common melody; and others, a musical instrument. Thus interpreters differ. In the seventh Psalm David, no doubt, calls either a song or some musical instrument by the word שגיון, *shegiun*. Yet some think that David bears testimony there to his own innocency; and that, as he was not conscious of having done wrong, his own innocency is alone signified by the title: but this is a strained view. The word is taken in this place, almost by common consent, for ignorances: and we know that the Hebrews denominate by ignorances all errors or falls which are not grievous, and such things as happen through inadvertence; and by this word they do not extenuate their faults, but acknowledge themselves to be inconsiderate when they offend. Then שגיון, *shegiun*, is no excusable ignorance, which men lay hold on as a pretext; but an error of folly and presumptions, when men are not sufficiently attentive to the word of God. But perhaps the word שגינות, *sheginut*, being here in the plural number, ought to be taken for musical instruments. Yet as I would not willingly depart from a received opinion, and as there is no necessity in this case to constrain us to depart from it, let us follow what had been already said, — that the Prophet dictates here for his people a form of prayer for ignorances, that is, that they could not otherwise hope for God's forgiveness than by seeking his favor.^{f44} And how can we be reconciled to God, except by his not imputing to us our sins?

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

PRAYER

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

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTEENTH

<35030> HABAKKUK 3:2

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

2. Jehova, audivi vocem tuam (auditum tuum, *ad verbum*, [שמעך]);^{f45}) Jehova, opus tuum in medio annorum vivifica illud (*sed relativum pronomen abundat;*) in medio annorum notum fac; in ira misericordiae recorderis.

THE Prophet says here, in the name of the whole people, that he was terrified by the voice of God, for so I understand the word, though in many places it means report, as some also explain it in this place. But as the preaching of the Gospel is called in <235301> Isaiah 53:1, שמעה, *shemo*, report, it seems to me more suitable to the present passage to render it the voice of God; for the general sentiment, that the faithful were terrified at the report of God, would be frigid. It ought rather to be applied to the Prophecies which have been already explained: and doubtless Habakkuk did not intend here to speak only in general of God's power; but, as we have seen in the last lecture, he humbly confesses the sins of the people, and then prays for forgiveness. It is then not to be doubted but that he says here, that he was terrified by the voice of God, that is, when he heard him threatening punishment so grievous. He then adds, *Revive thy work in the middle of the years, and make it known*. At last, by way of anticipation, he subjoins, that *God would remember his mercy*, though justly offended by the sins of the people.

But by saying, that he feared the voice of God, he makes a confession, or gives an evidence of repentance; for we cannot from the heart seek pardon, unless we be first made humble. When a sinner is not displeased with himself, and confesses not his guilt, he is not deserving of mercy. We then see why the Prophet speaks here of fear; and that is, that he might thus obtain for himself and for others the favor of God; for as soon as a sinner willingly condemns himself, and does not do this formally, but seriously

from the heart, he is already reconciled to God; for God bids us in this way to anticipate his judgement. This is one thing. But if it be asked, for what purpose the Prophet heard God's voice; the obvious answer is, — that as it is not the private prayer of one person, but of the whole Church, he prescribes here to the faithful the way by which they were to obtain favor from God, and turn him to mercy; and that is, by dreading his threatening and by acknowledging that whatever God threatened by his Prophets was near at hand.

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

“The work of thine hands thou wilt not despise,”
<19D808>Psalm 138:8.

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

By *the middle of the years*, he means the middle course, as it were, of the people's life. For from the time when God chose the race of Abraham to the coming of Christ, was the whole course, as it were, of their life, when we compare the people to a man; for the fullness of their age was at the coming of Christ. If, then, that people had been destroyed, it would have been the same as though death were to snatch away a person in the flower of his age. Hence the Prophet prays God not to take away the life of his people in the middle of their course; for Christ having not come, the people had not attained maturity, nor arrived at manhood. *In the middle*, then, *of the years thy work revive*; that is, “Though we seem destined to death, yet restore us.” *Make it known*, he says, in the middle of the years; that is, “Show it to be in reality thy work.”^{f46}

We now apprehend the real meaning of the Prophet. After having confessed that the Israelites justly trembled at Cod's voice, as they saw themselves deservedly given up to perdition, he then appeals to the mercy of God, and prays God to revive his own work. He brings forward here nothing but the favor of adoption: thus he confesses that there was no reason why God should forgive his people, except that he had been pleased freely to adopt them, and to choose them as his peculiar people; for on this account it is that God is wont to show his favor towards us even to the last. as, then, this people had been once chosen by God, the Prophet records this adoptions, and prays God to continue and fulfill to the end what he had begun. With regard to the half course of life, the comparison ought to be observed; for we see that the race of Abraham was not chosen for a short time, but until Christ the Redeemer was manifested. Now we have this in common with the ancient people, that God adopts us, that he may at length bring us into the inheritance of eternal life. Until, then, the work of our salvation is completed, we are, as it were, running our course. We may therefore adopt this form of prayer, which is prescribed for us by the Holy Spirit, — that God would not forsake his ohm work; in the middle of our course.

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

We have elsewhere said that the word wrath is not to be taken according to its strict sense, when the faithful or the elect are spoken of; for God does not chastise them because he hates them; nay, on the contrary, he thereby manifests the care he has for their salvations. Hence the scourges by which God chastises his children are testimonies of his love. But the Scripture

represents the judgement with which God visits his people as wrath, not towards their persons but towards their sins. Though then God shows love to his chosen, yet he testifies when he punishes their sins that iniquity is hated by him. When God then comes forth as it were as a judge, and shows that sins displease him, he is said to be angry with the faithful; and there is also in this a reference to the perceptions of men; for we cannot, when God chastises us, do otherwise than feel the accusations of our own conscience. Hence then is this hatred; for when our conscience condemns us we must necessarily acknowledge God to be angry with us, that is with respect to us. When therefore we provoke God's wrath by our sins we feel him to be angry with us; but yet the Prophet collects together things which seem wholly contrary — even that God *would remember mercy in wrath*; that is, that he would show himself displeased with them in such a way as to afford to the faithful at the same time some taste of his favor and mercy by finding him to be propitious to them.

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

<350303> HABAKKUK 3:3	
<p>3. God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.</p>	<p>3. Deus de Theman veniet, et Sanctus e monte Paran. Selach. ^{f47} Operuit coelos decor (<i>vel</i>, gloria) ejus; laude ejus plena est terra.</p>

This verse interpreters explain in two ways. Some construe the verb in the future tense in the past time — “God went forth from Teman, and the holy one from mount Paran”; for a verb in the past tense follows. But others consider it to be in the optative mood — “May God come, or go forth, from Teman, and the holy one from mount Paran;” as though the Prophet prayed God to come as the defender of his people from mount Sinai, where the law was promulgated and the covenant ratified, which God had formerly made with Abraham and his posterity. I rather subscribe to

their opinion who think that the manifestation of God, by which he had testified that he was the guardian of that people, is repeated by the Prophet. As, then, God had so made known his glory on mount Sinai, that it was evident that that nation was under his protection, so the Prophet, with the view of strengthening himself and others, records what was well known among the whole people — that is, that the law was given on mount Sinai, which was a testimony of singular favor; for God then by a new pledge testified, that the covenant formerly made with Abraham was firm and inviolable. The reason why Habakkuk does not mention mount Sinai, but Teman and Paran, seems to some to be this — because these mountains were nearer the Holy Land, though this view, I fear, will appear too refined; I therefore take this simple view — that instead of mentioning mount Sinai, he paraphrastically designates it by mount Paran and the desert of Teman. Some suppose these to be two mountains; but I know not whether Teman ought to be understood only as a mountain; it seems on the contrary to have been some large tract of country. It was a common thing among the Jews to add this name when they spoke of the south, as many nations were wont to give to winds the names of some neighboring places; so when the Jews wished to designate a wind from Africa, they called it Teman. “It is a Teman wind;” and so when they spoke of the south, they said Teman.

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

For it was not God’s will that the memory of that manifestation should be obliterated; but he had once appeared with glory so magnificent, that the people might feel assured that they would ever be safe, for they were protected by God’s hand, and that full of power, as the fathers had once

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

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

<350304> HABAKKUK 3:4	
<p>4. And <i>his</i> brightness was as the light; he had horns <i>coming</i> out of his hand: and there <i>was</i> the hiding of his power.</p>	<p>4. Et splendor quasi lux fuit; cornua e manu ejus ei, et ibi absconsio fortitudinis ejus.</p>

He confirms the declaration which I have explained that God, when he intended his presence to be made known to his people, gave evidences of his wonderful power, capable of awakening the minds of all. He then says, that the brightness was like light. By the word אור, *aur*, is doubtless meant the light, which diffuses itself through the whole world, and proceeds from the sun. Then he says, that the brightness which appeared

on mount Sinai was equal to the light of the sun, capable of filling the whole world. He adds, that *horns were to him from the hand*. Some render it, splendor; but קרן, *coren*, properly means a horn, and קרניים, *corenium*, is here in the dual number: it is therefore more probable, that the Prophet ascribes horns to God, carried in both hands; and it more corresponds with what immediately follows, that “there was the hiding of his strength,” or that “there was his power hidden.” They who render the word, splendours, think that what had been said is repeated, that is, that the brightness was like light; but they are mistaken, for we may collect from the verse that two different things are expressed by the Prophet: he first speaks of the visible form of God; and then he adds his power, designating it metaphorically by horns, which is common in Scripture. Indeed this mode of speaking occurs often. He then says, that God came armed with power, when he gave the law to his people; for he bore horns in his hands, where his strength was hid.^{f48}

As to the word *hiding*, some indeed give this refined view, that God then put forth his strength, which was before hidden. But this is a very strained explanation. To me it seems evident, that the Prophet in the first place says, that God’s glory was conspicuous, capable of irradiating the whole world like the light of the sun; and he then adds, that this splendor was connected with power, for God carried horns in both his hands, where his strength was laid: and he says, that it was hid, because God did not intend to make known his power indiscriminately throughout the world, but peculiarly to his own people; as it is also said in ^{<193120>} Psalm 31:20, that

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

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

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

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

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

And he says, that *before God's face walked the pestilence*; this is to be referred to the Egyptians; and that *ignited coal proceeded from his feet*. Some render רֶשֶׁף, *reshoph*, exile; but its etymology requires it to be rendered burning or ignited coal, and there is no necessity to give it another meaning.^{f49}

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

eternity that is he has means unknown to us by which he can deliver us from death, whenever it may please him.

But yet, if any prefer taking the *ways of eternity* as signifying the continued power of God, which has ever appeared from the beginning, the sense would be appropriate and not less useful: for it especially avails to confirm our faith, when we consider that God's power has ever been the same from the creation of heaven and earth, that it has never been lessened or undergone any change. Since, then, God has successively manifested his power through all ages, we ought hence to learn that we have no reason to despair, though he may for a time conceal his hand; for he is not on that account deprived of his right. He ever retains the sovereignty of the world. We ought, then, to be attentive to the ways of ages, that is, to the demonstration of that power, which was manifested in the creation of the world, and still continues to be manifested. ^{f50} It follows —

<350307> **HABAKKUK 3:7**

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

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

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

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

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

PRAYER

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

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTEENTH

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

Some understand by the word, אֵין, *aun*, nothing, or vanity; as though the Prophet had said, that the tells of Cushan had been reduced to nothing; but another sense is more probable; *I have seen the tents of Cushan on account of his iniquity*; ^{f51} that is, the reward which God had repaid, for the iniquity of the king of Cushan had been made manifest. The Prophet says that he had seen it, because it was evident and known to all. We now perceive what is meant that God had been a just judge against the army of Cushan; for as they had unjustly assailed the Israelites, so a just reward was rendered to them. The account of this we have in Judges 3. Chusan, the king of Mesopotamia, had well-nigh destroyed the Israelites, when the Lord put him to flight with all his forces. Some render the words, “The tents of Ethiopia,” as though it was written thus; but this is strained, and contrary to the rules of grammar; and besides, the following clause confirms what I have said; for the Prophet mentions the slaughter with which God destroyed the Midianites, who had also nearly overwhelmed the miserable people. He says that their curtains trembled, or their dwellings: for God, without the hand or sword of men, drove them into such madness, that they slew one another, as the sacred history testifies. See ^{<070601>}Judges 6:1, 7:1. It now follows —

<350308> HABAKKUK 3:8

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

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

The Prophet here applies the histories to which he has already referred, for the purpose of strengthening the hope of the faithful; so that they might know these to be so many proofs and pledges of God's favor towards them, and that they might thus cheerfully look for his aid, and not succumb to temptation in their adversities. When he asks, was God angry with the rivers and the sea, he no doubt intended in this way to awaken the thoughts of the faithful, that they might consider the design of God in the works which he had already mentioned; for it would have been unreasonable that God should show his wrath against rivers and the sea; why should he be angry with lifeless elements? The Prophet then shows that God had another end in view when he dried the sea, when he stopped the course of Jordan, and when he gave other evidences of his power. Doubtless God did not regard the sea and the rivers; for that would have been unreasonable. It then follows that these changes were testimonies of God's favor towards his Church: and hence the Prophet subjoins, that God *rode on his horses*, and that his *chariots were for salvation* to his people. ^{f52} We now perceive the Prophet's meaning, which interpreters have not understood, or at least have not explained.

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

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

<350309> **HABAKKUK 3:9**

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

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

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

We now see the import of the text; but he emphatically adds, *The oaths of the tribes*; for hereby he more fully confirms that God had not then assisted the children of Abraham, so as to discard them afterwards; but that he had really proved how true he was in his promises; for by the oaths

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

He calls them too *the oaths to the tribes*: for though God had spoken to Abraham and afterwards to Moses, yet the promise was deposited in the hands of Abraham, and of the patriarchs, and afterwards in those of Moses, that the people might understated that it belonged equally to them; for it would have been no great matter to promise what we read of to a few men only. But Abraham was as it were the depository; and it was a certain solemn stipulation made with his whole race. We hence see why the Prophet here mentions the tribes rather than Abraham, or the patriarchs or Moses. He had indeed a special regard to those of his own time, in order to confirm them, that they might not doubt but that God would extend to them also the same power. How so? Because God had formerly wrought in a wonderful manner for the deliverance of his people. Why? That he might prove himself to be true and faithful. In what respect? Because he had said, that he would be the protector of his people; and he did not adopt a few men only, but the whole race of Abraham. Since it was so, why should not his posterity hope for that which they knew was promised to their fathers? for the truth of God can never fail. Though many ages had passed

away, the faith of his people ought to have remained certain, for God intended to show himself to be the same as he had been formerly known by their fathers.

He afterwards adds אָמַר, *amer*, which means a word or speech; but it is to be taken here for a fixed and an irrevocable word. The word, אָמַר, *amer*, he says; that is, as they say, the word and the deed: for when we say, that words are given, we often understand that those who liberally promise are false men, and that we are only trifled with and disappointed when we place confidence in them. But the term, word, is sometimes taken in a good sense. "This is the word," we often say, when we intend to remove every doubt. We now then perceive what the Prophet meant by adding אָמַר, *amer*, the word. "O Lord, thou hast not given mere words to and people; but what has proceeded from thy mouth has been found to be true and valid. Such, therefore, is and faithfulness in thy promises, that we ought not to entertains the least doubt as to the event. As soon as thou givest to us any hope, we ought to feel assured of its accomplishment, as though it were not a word but the exhibition of the thing itself." In short, by this term the Prophet commends the faithfulness of God, lest we should harbour doubts as to his promises. ^{f53}

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

<350310> **HABAKKUK 3:10**

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

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

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

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

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

He then ascribes life to waters; for he says, that *the abyss gave its voice*, and also, that *the deep lifted up its hands*; or that the abyss with uplifted hands was ready to obey God. It is a striking personification; for though the abyss is void of intelligence, and it cannot speak, yet the Prophet says, that the abyss with its voice and uplifted hands testified its obedience, when God would have his people to pass through to the promised land. When anxious to testify our obedience, we do this both with our voice and in our gesture. When any one is willing to do what is commanded, he says, "Here I am," or "I promise to do this." As, then, servants respond to others, so the Prophet says, that a voice was uttered by the abyss. The abyss indeed uttered no voice; but the event itself surpassed all voices. Now when a whole people meet together, they raise their hands; for their consent cannot be understood except by the outstretching of the hands, and hence came the word hand-extending, *χειροτονια*. This similitude the Prophet now takes, and says, that the abyss raised up its hands; that is, shows its consent by this gesture. As when men declare by this sign that they will do what they are bidden; so also the abyss lifted up its hands. If we read, The deep raised up its hands, the sense will be the same.^{f54} Let us proceed -

<35031> HABAKKUK 3:11

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

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

Here the Prophet refers to another history; for we know that when Joshua fought, and when the day was not long enough to slay the enemies, the day was prolonged according to his prayer, (^{<061012>} Joshua 10:12.) He seems indeed to have authoritatively commanded the sun to stay its course: but there is no doubt, but that having been answered as to his prayer, when he expressed this, he commanded the sun, as he did, through the secret impulse of the Holy Spirit: and we know that the sun would not have stopped in its course, except the moon also was stayed. There must indeed have been the same action as to these two luminaries.

Hence Habakkuk says, that the *sun and moon stood still in their habitation*; that is, that the sun then rested as it were in its dwelling. When it was hastening in its course, it then stood still for the benefit of God's people. *The sun then and the moon stood*, — How? *At the light of thy arrows shall they walk*. Some refer this to the pillar of fire, as though the Prophet had said, that the Israelites walked by that light, by which God guided them: but I doubt not but that this is said of the sun. The whole sentence is thus connected — that the sun and moon walked, not as from the beginning, but at the light of God's arrows; that is, when instead of God's command, which the sun had received from the beginning as its direction, the sun had God's arrows, which guided it, retarded its course, or restrained the velocity which it had before. There is then an implied contrast between the progress of the sun which it had by nature to that day, and that new direction, when the sun was retained, that it might give place to the arrows of God, and to the sword and the spear; for by the arrows and the spear he means nothing else but the weapons of the elect people; for we know, that when that people fought under the protection of God, they were armed as it were from above. As then it is said of Gideon, "The sword of God and of Gideon;" so also in this place the Prophet calls whatever armor the people of Israel had, the arrows of God and his spear; for that people could not move — no, not a finger's breadth — without the command of God. The sun then was wont before to regard the ordinary command, of which we read in Genesis; but it was then directed for another purpose: for it had regard to the arrows of God flying on the earth as lightning; and it had regard to the arrows, as though it stood astonished and dared not to advance. Why? because it behoved it to submit to God while he was carrying on war.^{f55} We now then perceive how much kindness is included in these words.

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

<350312> **HABAKKUK 3:12**

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

12. In ira calcasti terram (*vel, ambulasti super terram; [צעד] enim significat ambulare;*) in ira (*est tamen aliud nomen, ergo vertamus uno loco, indignationem, vel, furorem, — in furore*) tritursti gentes (*vel, triturstis.*)

The Prophet relates here the entrance of the people into the land of Canaan, that the faithful might know that their fathers would not have obtained so many victories had not God put forth the power and strength of his hand. Hence he says, that God himself *had trampled on the land in anger*. For how could the Israelites have dared to attack so many nations, who had lately come forth from so miserable a bondage? They had indeed been in the desert for forty years; but they were always trembling and fearful, and we also know that they were weak and feeble. How then was it, that they overcame most powerful kings? that they made war with nations accustomed to war? Doubtless God himself *trod down the land in his wrath*, and also *threshed the nations*: as it is said in ^{<194405>} Psalm 44:5,

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

Justly then does the Prophet ascribe this to God, that he himself walked over the land; for otherwise the Israelites would never have dared to move a foot. Doubtless, they could never have been settled in that land, had not God gone before them. Hence when God did tread on the land in his anger, then it became a quiet habitation to the children of Abraham; warlike nations were then easily and without much trouble conquered by the Israelites, though they were previously very weak.

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

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

<350313> HABAKKUK 3:13	
13. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.	13. Egressus es in salutem populi tui, in salutem cum Christo tuo; transfodisti caput e domo impii, nudando fundamentum usque ad collum. Selah.

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

Thou wentest forth, he says, *for the salvation, for the salvation of thy people*. He repeats the word *salvation*, and not without reason; for he wished to call attention to this point, as when he had said before — that God had not in vain manifested, by so many miracles, his power, as though he were angry with the sea and with rivers, but had respect to the preservation of his people. Since then the salvation of the Church has ever been the design of God in working miracles, why should the faithful be now cast down, when for a time they were oppressed by adversities? for God ever remains the same: and why should they despond, especially since that ancient deliverance, and also those many deliverances, of which he had hitherto spoken, are so many evidences of his everlasting covenant. These indeed ought to be connected with the word of God; that is, with that promise, according to which he had received the children of Abraham into favor for the purpose of protecting them to the end. “For salvation, for salvation,” says the Prophet, and that of his elect people.

He adds, *with thy Christ*. This clause still more confirms what Habakkuk had in view — that God had been from the beginning the deliverer of his people in the person of the Mediator. When God, therefore, delivered his people from the hand of Pharaoh, when he made a way for them to pass through the Red Sea, when he redeemed them by doing wonders, when he subdued before them the most powerful nations, when he changed the laws of nature in their behalf — all these things he did through the Mediator. For God could never have been propitious either to Abraham himself or to his posterity, had it not been for the intervention of a Mediator. Since then it has ever been the office of the Mediator to preserve in safety the Church of God, the Prophet takes it now for granted, that Christ was now manifested in much clearer light than formerly; for David was his lively image, as well as his successors. God then gave a living representation of his Christ when he erected a kingdom in the person of David; and he promised that this kingdom should endure as long as the sun and moon should shine in the heavens. Since, then, there were in the time of Habakkuk clearer prophecies than in past times respecting the eternity of this kingdom, ought not the people to have taken courage, and to have known of a certainty that God would be their Deliverer, when Christ should come? We now then apprehend the meaning of the Prophet.^{f56} But I cannot now go farther; I shall defer the subject until tomorrow.

PRAYER

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

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTEENTH

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

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

As to the word סֵלָה, *selah*, I have hitherto said nothing; but I shall now briefly refer to what the Hebrew interpreters think. Some explain it by לְעוֹלָם, *laoulam*, “for ever;” and by עַד וְעַד, *od uod*, “yet and yet;” as though, when this word is inserted, the Holy Spirit pronounced what is to be for ever. Others render it by אָמֵן, *amen*, as though God testified that what is said is true and indubitable. But as it never occurs except in this song and in the Psalms, and does not always comport with what they say, that is, that it denotes certainty or perpetuity, I prefer embracing the opinion of those who think that it refers to singing, and not to things. And what they add is also probable, if we regard its etymology, for the word

means to raise or to elevate; and it was therefore put down to remind the singers to raise their voice. But as it is a thing of no great importance, it is enough shortly to state what others think. Let us now go on —

<350314> **HABAKKUK 3:14**

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

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

At the beginning of this verse the Prophet pursues the same subject — that God had wounded all the enemies of his people; and he says that the head of villages or towns had been wounded, though some think that פְּרִזִּים, *perezim*, mean rather the inhabitants of towns; for the Hebrews call fortified towns or villages פְּרִזוֹת, *perezut*, and the word is commonly found in the feminine gender; but as it is here a masculine noun, it is thought that it means the inhabitants. At the same time this does not much affect the subject; for the Prophet simply means, that not only things had been overthrown by God's hand, but also all the provinces under their authority; as though he had said that God's vengeance, when his purpose was to defend his people, advanced through all the villages and through every region, so that not a corner was safe.^{f57} But we must also notice what follows — *with his rods*. The Prophet means that the wicked had been smitten by their own sword. Though the word rods is put here, it is yet to be taken for all kinds of instruments or weapons; it is the same as though it was said that they had been wounded by their own hands.^{f58}

We now perceive the import of this clause — that God not only put forth his strength when he purposed to crush the enemies of his people, but that he had also smitten them with infatuation and madness, so that they destroyed themselves by their own hands. And this was done, as in the case of the Midianites, who, either by turning their swords against one another, fell by mutual wounds, or by slaying themselves, perished by their own hands. (<070702> Judges 7:2.) We indeed often read of the wicked that they ensnared themselves, fell into the pit which they had made, and,

in short, perished through their own artifices; and the Prophet says here that the enemies of the Church had fallen, through God's singular kindness, though no one rose up against them; for they had transfixed or wounded themselves by their own staff. Some read — "Thou hast cursed his sceptres and the head of his villages;" but the interpretation which I have given is much more appropriate.

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

He subjoins, *their exultation was to devour the poor*. He intimates that there was nothing in the world capable of resisting the wicked, had not God brought miraculous help from heaven; for when they came to devour the poor, they came not to wage war, but to devour the prey like wild beasts. Then he says, *to devour the poor in secret*. He means, that the people of God had no strength to resist, except help beyond all hope came from heaven. ^{f59}

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

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

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

Some read, “Thou hast trodden thy horses in the sea;” but it is a solecism, that is quite evident. Others, “Thou hast trodden in the sea by thy horses.” But what need is there of seeking such strained explanations, since the verb דָּרַךְ, *darek*, means to go or to march? The Prophet’s meaning is by no means doubtful — that God would make a way for himself in the sea, and on his own horses. How? even when *great waters were gathered into a mass*. The Prophet again refers to the history of the passage through the Red Sea; for it was a work of God, as it has been said, worthy of being remembered above all other works: it is therefore no wonder that the Prophet dwells so much in setting forth this great miracle. *Thou* then *didst make a way for thy horses* — where? *in the sea*; which was contrary to nature. And then he adds, *The heap of waters*: for the waters had been gathered together, and a firm and thick mass appeared, which was not according to nature; for we know that water is a fluid, and that hardly a drop of water can stand without flowing.^{f60} How then was it that he stopped the course of Jordan, and that the Red Sea was divided? These were evidences of God’s incomprehensible power, and rightly ought these to have added courage to the faithful, knowing, as they ought to have done, that nothing could have opposed their salvation, which God was not able easily to remove, whenever it pleased him. It follows —

<350316> **HABAKKUK 3:16**

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

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

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

for certainly he did not then speak of himself but of the ancient people. As, then, the Prophet here undertakes the cause of the whole Church, he speaks as though he were the collective body of the people: and so he says that he had heard; but the faithful speak here as with one mouth, that they had *heard*, and that their *inside trembled*.

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

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

He now adds, *That I may rest in the day of affliction*.^{f61} There seems to be here an inconsistency — that the Prophet was affected with grief even to rottenness, that he trembled throughout his members with dread, and now that all this availed to produce rest. But we must inquire how rest is to be obtained through these trepidations, and dreads, and tremblings. We indeed know that the more hardened the wicked become against God, the more grievous ruin they ever procure for themselves. But there is no way of obtaining rest, except for a time we tremble within ourselves, that is, except God’s judgement awakens us, yea, and reduces us almost to nothing. Whosoever therefore securely slumbers, will be confounded in the

day of affliction; but he who in time anticipates the wrath of God, and is touched with fear, as soon as he hears that God the judge is at hand, provides for himself the most secure rest in the day of affliction. We now then see, that the right way of seeking rest is set forth here by the Prophet, when he says, that he had been confounded, and that rottenness had entered into his bones that he could have no comfort, except he pined away as one half-dead: and the design of the Prophet, as I have already said, was to exhort the faithful to repentance. But we cannot truly and from the heart repent, until our sins become displeasing to us: and the hatred of sin proceeds from the fear of God, and that sorrow which Paul regards as the mother of repentance. (<470710> 2 Corinthians 7:10.)

This exhortation is also very necessary for us in the present day. We see how inclined we are by nature to indifference; and when God brings before us our sins, and then sets before us his wrath, we are not moved; and when we entertain any fear, it soon vanishes. Let us, then, know that no rest can be to us in the day of distress, except we tremble within ourselves, except dread lays hold on all our faculties, and except all our soul becomes almost rotten. And hence it is said in <190404> Psalm 4:4, “Tremble, and ye shall not sin.” And Paul also shows that the true and profitable way of being angry is, when one is angry with his sins (<490426> Ephesians 4:26,) and when we tremble within ourselves. In the same manner does the Prophet describe the beginnings of repentance, when he says, that the faithful trembled in their bowels, and were so shaken within, that even their lips quivered, and, in short, (and this is the sum of the whole,) that all their senses felt consternation and fear.

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

In short, he intimates, that they who had been moved and really terrified by God’s vengeance, would be in a quiet state when God executed his judgements. How so? because they would calmly submit to the rod, and

look for a happy deliverance from their evils; for their minds would be seasonably prepared for patience, and then the Lord would also console them, as it is said in ^{<195117>}Psalm 51:17, that he despises not contrite hearts. When, therefore, the faithful are in a suitable time humbled, and when they thus anticipate the judgement of God, they then find a rest prepared for them in his bosom. It follows —

<350317> HABAKKUK 3:17, 18	
17. Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:	17. Quia ficus non florebit, et nullus erit fructus in vineis; fraudabit opus olivae, et agri non producent cibum (ad verbum, non faciet cibum; est mutatio numeri, sed esset asperior illa translatio; Agri igitur non producent cibum: porro hac voce comprehendi triticum, legumina, et quae ad victum pertinent, satis liquet;) excissum est ab ovili pecus, et nullus bos in stabulis:
18. Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.	18. Ego autem in Jehova exultabo, laetabor in Deo salutis meae.

The Prophet declares now at large what that rest would be of which he had spoken; it would be even this — that he would not cease to rejoice in God, even in the greatest afflictions. He indeed foresees how grievous the impending punishment would be, and he warns also and arouses the faithful, that they might perceive the approaching judgement of God. He says, *Flourish shall not the fig, and no fruit shall be on the vines; fail shall the olive*. First, the fig shall not flourish; then, the fields shall produce nothing; and lastly, the cattle and the sheep shall fail. Though the figs produce fruit without flowering, it is not yet an improper use of פֶּרַח, *perech*, which means strictly to bud.^{f62} He means that the desolation of the land was nigh at hand, and that the people would be reduced to extreme poverty. But it was an instance of rare virtue, to be able to rejoice in the Lord, when occasions of sorrow met him on every side.

The Prophet then teaches us what advantage it is to the faithful seasonably to submit to God, and to entertain serious fear when he threatens them,

and when he summons them to judgement; and he shows that though they might perish a hundred times, they would yet not perish, for the Lord would ever supply them with occasions of joy, and would also cherish this joy within, so as to enable them to rise above all their adversities. Though, then, the land was threatened with famine, and though no food would be supplied to them, they would yet be able always to rejoice in the God of their salvation; for they would know him to be their Father, though for a time he severely chastised them. This is a delineation of that rest of which he made mention before.

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

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

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

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

<350319> **HABAKKUK 3:19**

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

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

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

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

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

He adds, *on my beatings*. This word, נְגִינֹת, *neginoth*, I have already explained in my work on the Psalms. Some think that it signifies a melody, others render it beatings (*pulsationes*) or notes (*modos*;) and others

consider that musical instruments are meant.^{f63} I affirm nothing in a doubtful matter: and it is enough to bear in mind what we have said, — that the Prophet promises here to God a continual thanksgiving, when the faithful were redeemed, for not only each one would acknowledge that they had been saved by God's hand, but all would assemble together in the Temple, and there testify their gratitude, and not only with their voices confess God as their Deliverer, but also with instruments of music, as we know it to have been the usual custom under the Law.

PRAYER

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

A TRANSLATION OF

CALVIN'S VERSION OF

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK.

CHAPTER 1.

- 1 THE burden which Habakkuk the Prophet saw:
- 2 How long, Jehovah, shall I cry, And thou wilt not hear? *And* cry aloud to thee of violence, And thou wilt not save?
- 3 Why showest thou me iniquity, And makest me to see trouble? And *why* are violence and plunder in my sight, And he who excites strife and contention? (19)
- 4 Therefore dissolved is the law, And judgment does not continually go forth; For the wicked surrounds the just, Therefor go forth does perverted judgment. (21)
- 5 Look ye among the Gentiles and see, And be astonished, be astonished; For a work will I work in your days, Which ye will not believe, though it be told you:
- 6 For behold, I will rouse the Chaldeans — A nation bitter and hasty, Which shall march through the breadths of the earth, To possess habitations not its own:
- 7 Terrible and fearful *shall it* be, From itself shall its judgment and its dignity proceed:
- 8 And swifter than leopards *shall be* its horses, And fiercer than the evening wolves; And numerous shall be its horsemen; And its horsemen from far shall come, They shall fly as an eagle hastening to devour: (30)

- 9 The whole *of it* for booty shall come; The aspect of their faces will be like the east-wind; And he will gather captives like the sand:
- 10 And at kings he will laugh, And princes *shall be* a scorn to him: Every fortress he will scorn, He will gather dust and take it:
- 11 Then will be change his spirit, And pass through and act impiously, *Ascribing* this his power to his god. (37)
- 12 Art not thou, Jehovah, from the beginning, my God? My holy One! we shall not die: Thou, Jehovah, for judgment hast set him; And thou strong One, for correction hast established him.
- 13 Pure art thou of eyes, so as not to behold evil, And on trouble thou canst not look: — Why lookest thou on transgressors, And takest no notice, when the ungodly devours One more righteous than himself?
- 14 Thou makest man like the fish of the sea, Like the reptile, which is without a leader: (46)
- 15 The whole by his hook will he draw up, Collect into his drag, and gather into his net; He will therefore rejoice and exult: (48)
- 16 Hence sacrifice will he to his drag, And incense will he offer to his net; For through them fat *will be* his portion, And his meat *will be* rich. —
- 17 Shall he therefore extend his drag, And continue to slay the nations, so as not to spare *them*?

CHAPTER 2

- 1 On my watch-tower will I stand, And set myself on a citadel; And I will watch to see what he may say to me, And what I may answer to the reproof given me.
- 2 Then answer me did Jehovah and said, Write the vision, and make it plain on tables, That run may he who reads it;

- 3** For yet the vision shall be for an appointed time, And will speak at the end, and will not deceive: If it tarry, wait for it; (66) for coming it will come, and will not delay.
- 4** Behold the elated! not right is his soul within him; But the just, by his faith, shall he live.” (72)
- 5** Yea, truly! as by wine, transgress does the proud man, And he will not rest; (87) For he enlarges as the grave his soul, And is like to death, and is not satisfied; Yea, he collects to himself all nations, And heaps together for himself all the people.
- 6** Shall not all these take up against him a parable, And against him an enigmatical taunt, and say, — “Ho! he multiplies what is not his own! how long! And he accumulates on himself thick clay!
- 7** Shall they not suddenly rise up who shall bite thee, And awake, who shall torment thee? And shalt not thou become trappings to them?
- 8** As thou has spoiled many nations, Spoil thee shall all the remnant of the people, On account of men’s blood, and of violence To the land, to the city and to all its inhabitants.
- 9** Ho! he covets an evil covetousness to his house, In order to set on high his nest, That he may keep himself from the hand of evil!
- 10** Thou hast provided shame for thine own house, By cutting off many nations, And thou hast sinned against thine own soul.”
- 11** For the stone from the wall shall cry, ^{f64} And the wood from the chamber shall answer it, —
- 12** “Ho! he builds a town by blood, And sets up a city by iniquity!”
- 13** Behold, shall nothing be from Jehovah of hosts? Hence labour shall the people in the fire, And weary themselves in vain;
- 14** For filled shall be earth with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, As the waters cover the sea.

- 15** Wo to him who gives his friend drink! — Uniting thy heat, thou makes them also to drink, That thou mayest look on their nakedness. (112)
- 16** Thou art filled with shame for the sake of glory; Drink thou also, and be thou uncovered: Poured forth to thee shall be the cup of Jehovah's right hand, And shameful spewing shall be on thy glory:
- 17** For overwhelm thee shall the violence done to Lebanon, And the spoiling of beasts, which terrified them; On account of men's blood, and of violence To the land, to the city, and to all its inhabitants.
- 18** What avails the graven image? For graven it hath its framer, *Even* the molten image and the teacher of falsehood; For trust does the framer in his own work, when he makes dumb idols. (122)
- 19** Wo to him who saith to wood, "Awake;" *And* "Arise," to a dumb stone; — it will teach: Behold, it is covered with gold and silver; *And there is* no spirit in the midst of it. (124) But Jehovah is in his holy Temple: Silent at his presence let the whole earth be.

CHAPTER 3.

- 1** The prayer of Habakkuk the Prophet respecting ignorances:
- 2** Jehovah! I heard thy voice, and was terrified; Jehovah! thy work in the midst of the years, revive it; In the midst of the years, make it know; In wrath thy mercy remember. (137)
- 3** God! from Teman he came; And the holy One from mount Paran: Selah: Cover the heaven did his glory; Of his praise full was the earth:
- 4** And brightness, — as the light it was; Horns, — from his hands they were; (143) And there was the hiding of his strength:
- 5** Before his face walked the pestilence, And come forth did burning coals at his feet:

- 6** He stood, and he measured the earth; He looked, and he dissolved nations; Yea, shattered were perennial mountains, Bent down were hills of antiquity; The ways of ages were his.
- 7** For iniquity saw I the tents of Chusan; (150) Tremble did the curtains of the land of Madian.
- 8** Wert thou angry with rivers, O Jehovah? Was thine indignation against rivers? Was thy wrath against the sea? For thou didst ride on thy horses, Thy chariots *were* salvation.
- 9** Quite bare was made thy bow: The oaths to the tribes *was thy* word: Selah: (155) With rivers didst thou cleave the earth.
- 10** See thee did mountains, they fell down; The stream of waters passed away; Utter its voice did the deep, On high did it raise its hands. (158)
- 11** The sun *and* moon stood still *in their* habitation; At the light of thy arrows did they proceed, At the brightness of the glittering of thy spear. (160)
- 12** In wrath didst thou tread on the land, In anger didst thou thresh the nations:
- 13** Go forth didst thou for the salvation of thy people, For *their* salvation, with thy Christ: Strike didst thou the head From the house of the wicked, Making bare the foundation even to the neck: (164)
- 14** Smite didst thou with his own staffs The head of his villages: They rushed as a whirlwind to drive me away; Their joy was to devour the poor in secret:
- 15** A way hast thou made in the sea for thy horses, *Through* the heap of great waters. (168)
- 16** I heard, — and tremble did my bowels, At *thy* voice quiver did my lips; Enter did rottenness into my bones, And within me I made a great noise; That I might rest in the day of affliction, When he ascends against the people, Who shall cut them off. (171)

- 17** For the fig-tree shall not flourish, And no fruit shall be on the vines, Fail shall the produce of the olive, And the fields shall not bring forth food; cut off from the fold shall be the flock, And there shall be no ox in the stalls:
- 18** But I — in Jehovah will I exult, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation:
- 19** Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength; And he will set my feet as those of hinds, And on my high places will he make me to walk — To the leader on my beatings.

FOOTNOTES

- ft1a** Poeticus est Habbaccuci stylus; sed maxime in Oda, quae inter absolutissimas in eo genere merito numerari *potest*. — *Proel*, 21..
- ft1b** Equidem totum hunc locum pari qua ingressus est magnificentia exornat vates; ex tanta rerum admirandarum copia nobilissima quaeque seligens, eaque coloribus splendidissimis, imaginibus, figuris, dictione elatissima illustrans; quorum summam sublimitatem cumulat et commendat singularis clausulae elegantia: ita ut, nisi una atque altera ei insideret obscuritatis nebula vetustate, ut videtur, inducta, vix quidquam hoc poemate in suo genere extaret luculentius aut perfectius. — *Proel*. 28.
- ft1c** Is nihil videtur habere singulare aut eximium, in dispositione rerum, vel colore dictionis. — *Proel*, 21.
- ft1d** Est vaticiniorum ejus argumentum Deo dignissimum, sive serias ejus redargutiones, sive severas comminationes, sive amicas monitiones, sive blandas promissiones, ad gratiam N. T. quam maxime protensas, spectemus. In quibus omnibus non tantum quoad rem consentientes alios habet vates, sed et phrases adhibuit. — *Anal. Tseph. Exeg.*
- ft1e** **I.** <370101> Haggai 1:1-11.
II. <370112> Haggai 1:12-15.
III. <370201> Haggai 2:1-9.
IV. <370210> Haggai 2:10-19.
V. <370220> Haggai 2:20-23.
- ft1** Who Habakkuk was is uncertain. Some have concluded, from chapter 3:19, that he was of the tribe of Levi; but the premises do not warrant the conclusion. “He was probably,” says *Adam Clarke*, “of the tribe of *Simeon*, and a native of Beth-zacar.” The grounds for this probability are not stated. — *Ed.*
- ft2** *Newcome*’s opinion is the following: — “It seems probable that Habakkuk lived after the taking of Nineveh, as he prophesies of the Chaldeans, and is silent on the subject of the Assyrians. We have also reason to conclude that he prophesied not long before the Jewish captivity. See chapter 1:5; 2:3; 3:2,6-19. He may therefore be placed in the reign of Jehoiakim, between the years 606 and 598 before Christ.”

Henderson agrees with this view.

“Hunc librum canonicum esse constat,” — tum 1. quia in Bibliis Hebrais extat; tum 2. quia in N.T. allegatum, <441341> Acts 13:41; <450117> Romans 1:17; <480311> Galatians 3:11; <581038> Hebrews 10:38. It appears that this book is canonical, 1., because it is extant in Hebrew; 2., because it is quoted in the New Testament,” etc. — *Tarnovius*.

CHAPTER 1

^{ft3} Rather, a causative meaning; for so does *Calvin* take it; and *Junius* and *Tremelius*, *Piscator*, *Grotius*, and *Newcome*, agree with him: but *Drusius*, *Marckius*, *Henderson*, and others, consider it simply in the sense of seeing or beholding, and say with truth, that there is no other instance in which it has, though it be often found, as here, in Hiphil, a causative sense. The context, as *Calvin* says, seems certainly to favor this meaning; and we might suppose that *Habakkuk* used it in a sense different from others, were it not that he uses it at least twice in this very chapter, verses 5 and 13, simply in the sense of seeing or beholding.

In these two verses there is no need of continuing the interrogatory form throughout, nor is this justified by the original. A strictly literal rendering, such as the following, would be the most appropriate:

2. How long, Jehovah, have I cried, and thou hearest not? I cry aloud to thee, “oppression,” and thou savest not:

3. Why showest thou to me iniquity? Yea, wickedness is what thou seest; Even wasting and oppression are before me; Then there is strife, and contention arises.

Some think that there is to be understood a preposition before [חַמְסָה], which I render “oppression,” in the second line; but there is no need of it. The word means outrage, wrong forcibly done, violent injustice. [עֲמָלָה], wickedness, in the second line of the third verse, in its primary sense, is labor, toil; it means also what produces toil, mischief, wickedness. *Henderson* renders it misery; but it is not so suitable; for it must be something that corresponds with iniquity in the previous line. Wickedness is the word adopted by *Newcome*. [רִיבָה], strife, is a

verbal contention or quarrel; and [מִדּוֹן] contention, is a judicial contest, or a trial by law. Then in the next verse we see how unjustly this trial was conducted. — *Ed.*

^{ft4} *Calvin* omits to notice “therefore,” [עַל-כֵּן], at the beginning of the verse. *Henderson* says, that the connection is with the second verse: but this can hardly be the case; and certainly what this verse contains is no reason for what is stated in the previous verse. [לְכֹן], a similar proposition with this, when followed by [כִּי], as the case is here, refers sometimes to what follows and not to what precedes. See ^{<191610>} Psalm 16:10,11; 78:21,22. The meaning of the verse will be elicited, as I can conceive, by the following version: —

*On this account the law fails, And judgment goeth not forth to victory, —
Because wickedness surrounds the righteous;
Yea, on this account perverted judgment goeth forth.*

The expression, [לֹא לְנֶצַח], is rendered “never” in our version, and by *Newcome*; but it never means this: “not for ever, or not always,” it is rendered in other places. See ^{<190919>} Psalm 9:19; 74:19. But [נֶצַח] means as a noun, superiority, excellency, strength, victory; and this, according to *Parkhurst*, is what it means here. It seems better to render [רָשָׁע], wickedness, than wicked. It means injustice, the perversion of right, and by this the just man was surrounded or completely beset, so that he had no chance of having justice done to him. — *Ed.*

^{ft5} This may perhaps be considered one of the *very few* instances in which the *Septuagint* seems to have retained the true reading without the countenance of a single MS.; for the word “despisers” is more suitable to the context. The very same word is found in the 13th verse of this chapter. The omission is very trifling, only of the letter [ד], and Paul in quoting this passage, in ^{<441341>} Acts 13:41, retains this word, while in the other clauses he departs from the *Septuagint*, and comes nearer to the Hebrew text. *Pocock* thought that [בְּגוֹיִם] is a noun from the Arabic [بَغِيء], which means to be unjust or injurious; and thus the Hebrew is made the same with the *Septuagint*, and St. Paul, *καταφρονῆται*, despisers — the insolent; but the former supposition seems the more probable — that the letter [ד] has been omitted. *Dathius* renders the word “*perfidi* — perfidious,” and *Newcome* “transgressors.” — *Ed.*

^{ft6} This is the proper rendering, and not as in our version. It is not the usual mode in Hebrew to enhance the meaning by connecting two verbs together; but the two other verbs here are in the imperative mood, only the first is in Niphal and the other in Kal. *Parkhurst* very properly renders them, *and be ye astonished, wonder*, etc. The repetition, says *Drusius*, is for the sake of emphasis. — *Ed.*

^{ft7} “Bitter” rendered “cruel” by *Drusius*. To be “bitter” in mind means passively, to be grieved, or distressed, or discontented, ^{<092202>} 1 Samuel 22:2; and actively, to be revengeful, cruel, or inhuman, Jude 18:25 — “Hasty” signifies to be rash, inconsiderate, or soon excited and made angry. It is obvious that the order is reversed; what follows is mentioned first, and then what precedes it; for to be hasty in entertaining anger is first, and then follows cruelty in executing it. A similar order is found in the next verse; the worst feature is mentioned first, that the nation would be “terrible;” and then what is less, that it would be “fearful.” This is what is often done by the writers of both of the Old and New Testament. — *Ed.*

^{ft8} The word, [מַרְהַבִּים], means “breadths” or broad places, or wide regions, as *Henderson* renders it. — *Ed.*

^{ft9} *Multiples*, various: but this is not the meaning of the verb [פָּשַׁח]; it signifies to range at large, or to spread far and wide. The whole verse may be thus rendered, —

*And swifter than leopards shall be its horses,
And more eager than the wolves of the evening;
Spread far and wide shall its horsemen;
Yea, its horsemen from far shall come,
And fly as an eagle hastening to devour.*

The horsemen are represented as sweeping the whole country, spreading themselves in all directions; and when espying a prey at a distance, they are said to fly to it like an eagle. The idea of being “numerous” or “abundant,” as *Junius* and *Tremelius* render the verb, is derived from the Rabbins, and is not sanctioned by examples in Scripture. The rendering of the Septuagint is ἐξίππασονται, shall ride forth, and of *Jerome*, *diffundentur*, shall spread themselves. There is no occasion to borrow a meaning from Arabic, as *Henderson* does, and to render it “spread proudly along.” *Newcome* follows our common version. — *Ed.*

^{ft10} This clause has been variously interpreted. The *Targum*, *Vulgate*, and *Symmachus*, countenance the view given here. There is no help from the Septuagint, as no sense is given. The word [מגמח], only found here, is rendered by *Symmachus*, προσοψις, sight, aspect. Targum explains it by a word which signifies “front.” *Henderson* and *Lee* regard this as its meaning. Others, as *Newcome* and *Drusius* render it, supping up, or absorption, and derive it from [גמא], to drink up, to absorb; and they regard the idea to be, that the very presence of the Chaldeans would absorb every thing like a scorching wind. But “the supping up of their faces *shall be as* the east wind,” which is *Newcome*’s version, is an odd phrase. The last word has [ה] affixed to it, which is never the case when it means the east wind. It is by all admitted, that “towards the east” is its proper construction. Hence the most probable rendering of this passage is, “The aspect of their faces shall be towards the east;” and with this corresponds what follows, that they should “gather captives as the sand;” that is, that they might carry them away to the place where they turned their faces.

The version of *Henderson*, which is essentially that of *Symmachus*, is the following, —

The aspect of their faces is like the east wind.

He owns the difficulty as to the last word, and views it here as in an irregular form. *Dathius* gives this paraphrase, —

It will have its face direct towards the east.

He says that the word [קדום], by itself never means the pestilential wind from the east; but that when it means this, it has another word attached to it. — *Ed.*

^{ft11} The foregoing verse is one on which no satisfactory explanation has been given. The one adopted here has been materially followed by *Vatablus*, *Druivius*, and *Dathius*, except as to the last clause. As to the first part of the verse *Henderson* gives the best sense, for it corresponds with “changing” to [חלף] and “courage” to [רוח], (see Joshua 2:11; 5:1;) and of “passing onward” to [עבר], and not of “passing over,” *i.e.* bounds or moderation, which it seems not to have, when used, as here, intransitively. The passing here is evidently what

is referred to in verse 6, as the renewing of courage would arise, from the success mentioned in verse 10.

The best exposition of the last clause is what *Grotius* has suggested, and has been followed by *Marckius* and *Dathius* — that the Chaldeans made their own strength their God; (see verse 16;) the rendering then would be this, —

*Then will it renew courage, And pass through,
and become guilty; — This is strength being its god,
or literally, This is strength for its god.*

There is an inconsistency in our version, and also in *Calvin*, as to this passage, from verse 6 to the end of this verse. The number is changed. The “bitter nation,” mentioned in verse 6, is meant throughout; and we ought to adopt the plural number throughout, as *Newcome* does, or, according to *Henderson*, the singular. There is no change of person, as some suppose, at the beginning of verse 10; for [𐤒𐤓𐤕], there, and [𐤒𐤓𐤕] in verse 6 is the same — the “bitter nation.” — *Ed.*

^{ft12} Most commentators agree with our version in connecting “from the beginning,” or “from eternity,” with Jehovah, and not as *Calvin* seems to do, with “God.” His view is evidently the most consonant with the design of the passage, and countenanced by the Septuagint, for Jehovah is rendered *κυριε*, in the vocative case. To assert the eternity of God seems not to be necessary here; but to say that he had been from old times the God of Israel is what is suitable to the context. The Prophet in saying “my God,” identifies himself with the people; for he says afterwards, “we shall not die.” Viewed in this light the former part of the verse may be thus rendered, —

*Art not thou from of old, O Jehovah,
my God! My holy one, we shall not die.*

The reason for which he calls him “holy” will appear from what the next verse contains. The Prophet seems to sustain himself by two considerations — that Jehovah was the God of Israel, and that he was a holy God. When he says “we shall not die,” he means, no doubt, as *Marckius* observes, that the people as a nation would not be destroyed, for he had prophesied of their subjugation and captivity by the Chaldeans. What he had in view was the Church of God, respecting which promises had been made. — *Ed.*

ft13 It seems that *Calvin* regarded “my holy one,” as equivalent to “my sanctifier;” he who had separated the people from others to be his own. The primary meaning of [קדש] is no doubt to separate a thing from a common use to a sacred one; but whether in this connection it has this meaning is not quite certain. “The holy one of Israel” is a phrase several times used by *Isaiah*, see chapter 30:11; 43:3, etc. The sentence here may be rendered, “God of my holiness,” or “My God, my holiness.” — *Ed.*

ft14 Many agree in this view, *Drusius, Piscator, Marckius, Henderson*, etc. The Septuagint affords no help. The rendering of *Symmachus* is κραταιον, strong, and of *Aquila*, στερεον, firm; then it would be, “and strong (or firm) for correction hast thou established him.” *Grotius*, and also *Newcome*, adopt this meaning.

And thou hast founded them on a rock to chasten us.

This is, no doubt, the easiest and most natural construction. See <260309> *Ezekiel* 3:9. God rendered the Chaldean nation firm, and strong, and resolute, to punish the Jews. — *Ed.*

ft15 Adjectives and participles in Hebrew commonly take a plural form, but not always, as evidently in the present case; for the word for “pure,” though singular, will admit of a better construction with “eyes” than in any other way; and so *Grotius* renders the clause, “Purer are thine eyes,” etc.; which is better than our version, followed by *Newcome* and *Henderson*. The whole passage will thus read better: —

*Purer are thine eyes than to behold evil,
And to look on wickedness thou art not able:
Why then lookest thou on the perfidious,
And art still when the wicked swallows up
One more righteous than himself?
And makest man to be like the fish of the sea,
Like the reptile which has no ruler?*

“Evil” means here wrong, injustice; the corresponding clause is “the wicked” swallowing up or oppressing his better. The Jews were bad, but better than the Chaldeans. “Wickedness,” [עמל], is such a mischief as is done through treachery: hence in the next line, which, according to the style of the Prophets, corresponds with this, “the perfidious” are mentioned, improperly rendered “plunderers” by

Henderson, and “transgressors” by *Newcome*. The Chaldeans had been the allies of the Jews.

With respect to the reptile or the crawling fish, such as keep to the bottom of the waters, why is it said to be without a ruler? Is it more insulated and less gregarious, so to speak, than other fish? If so, “without a ruler” has an obvious meaning. — *Ed.*

ft16 The construction of this verse can only be understood by a reference to the preceding verse; where two things are mentioned, the fish of the sea and the reptile: as it is customary with the Prophets, the first clause was raised up by a hook, and the fish were enclosed in a net, or collected by a drag. The reptile, [רמש], is in the singular number, and used in a collective sense, and [כלה], every one, at the beginning of this verse, is in the same number. This entirely removes the difficulty which critics have felt, and made them to propose emendations. The verse then would read thus: —

*Every one (i.e. every reptile) by a hook he raises up
He draws them out (i.e. the fish) by his net,
And collects them by his drag;
He therefore rejoices, and exults.*

To “gather then *into* the net” can hardly be sense; nor is “*in* the net” much better. The drawing out and the collecting were evidently *by* the net and the drag; the preposition, [ב], has very commonly this meaning, as ἐν in Greek.

The representation here is, that every means would be employed: men being compared to fishes, some are set forth as creeping along the bottom, and others as swimming at large at all depths; and then the fisherman, the Chaldean comes, and draws out the first by a fishing-hook, and the rest by a net and a ddrag; so that he takes them all. — *Ed.*

ft17 “His fat portion and rich meat” were the people whom he conquered. The words verbatim are these, —

For through them abundant his portion, And his meat well-fed.

The comparison of the drag and net is continued; by which is signified military strength and power. See ²³¹⁰¹³ Isaiah 10:13. — *Ed.*

ft18 The verb is [קריק], a hiphil form, and means, to evacuate, to empty, to empty out, and this is the sense in which it is taken here by *Drusius*,

Marckius, Newcome, and Henderson. But the verb means also to draw out, *i.e.*, a sword, ^{<021509>}Exodus 15:9, ^{<032633>}Leviticus 26:33, and to draw forth, *i.e.*, an army, ^{<011414>}Genesis 14:14, and this is the meaning given to it by *Grotius, Junius,* and the Septuagint. To draw forth, to extend, or to expand, seems most in accordance with the drift of the passage. To empty his net, and that for the sake of filling it again, which must be what is implied, is rather a farfetched notion. — *Ed.*

CHAPTER 2

^{ft19} On my watch-tower, [משמרת]; the word means commonly the office, or the act of watching, but here it means evidently the place; the verb “stand” and the corresponding word [מצור] fortress, or citadel, in the next line, prove clearly that this is its meaning here. The metaphor is taken from the practice of ascending a high tower, when any messenger was expected with news. That any locality is meant here is supported by nothing in the passage. The Prophet puts himself in an attitude of waiting for an answer from God to the complaints which he had made: and the metaphor of “tower and citadel” is most beautifully applied by *Calvin,* and in a very instructive and striking manner. I give this version

*On my watch-tower will I stand,
And I will set myself on a citadel;
That I may look out to see what he will say to me,
And what I shall answer to the reproof given to me;
Literally, to my reproof. — Ed.*

^{ft20} That is, to the chiding, rebuke, or reproof, given to me. Both *Newcome* and *Henderson* give a version of this line, which is nearly the same, but seems incongruous, though *Grotius* agrees with them. The version of the former is as follows: —

*And what I should reply to my arguing with him.
The latter renders the line thus: —
And what I shall reply in regard to my argument.*

The phrase is, [על-תוכחת] upon, (to, says *Drusius*) my reproof, or rebuke, or chiding. This is the current meaning of the word, see ^{<121903>}2 Kings 19:3; ^{<201017>}Proverbs 10:17; 12:1; ^{<233703>}Isaiah 37:3. He calls it “my,” because given him, either by his enemies, as *Calvin*

thinks, or by God, as some others suppose. The view of *Piscator* and *Junius* is, that it is the reproof or correction he administered to the people in chapter 1:2-12. He was waiting to know what he might have to give as a reply in defense of that reproof. “And what I may reply as to my reproof,” *i.e.*, the reproof given by him. In this case, the preceding clause, “What he may or will say to me,” refers to his complaint respecting the Chaldeans. This is altogether consistent with the mode in which the Prophets usually write: reversing the order, they take up first the last subject, and then refer to the first. He then waited to know two things, how to solve his difficulties respecting the conduct of the Chaldeans, and how to reply to his own people for the severe rebuke he gave them. There is much in this view to recommend it. — *Ed.*

^{ft21} The word means, to open, or make open. It was to be written in open and plain letters, and on tables or tablets. These were either of wood or stone, made smooth. The Septuagint render the word **πυξιον**, a smooth plank of boxwood, and give the whole sentence thus: “Write the vision and openly (or plainly — **σαφῶς**,) on boxwood.” See ^{<052708>} Deuteronomy 27:8. So *Junius* takes the word as an adverb, *perspicue*, perspicuously. — *Ed.*

^{ft22} It is not a common word that is used: [**נָפַח**], “it will breathe.” When transitively, it signifies, to breathe out or forth, and is rendered often in our version, to speak; see ^{<200619>} Proverbs 6:19; 12:17. The idea here seems to be the restoration, as it were, of a suspended life. The vision was to be for a time like a body without any symptom of life: but “it will breathe,” he says, “at last,” or at the end; that is, it will live, and manifest life and vigor. This breathing, or this life, would be its accomplishment. Corresponding with this idea is **ἀνατελι**, “it will rise,” by the Septuagint. — *Ed.*

^{ft23} [**כֹּזֵב**], its primary meaning, is to fail, ^{<236311>} Isaiah 63:11; and to fail, in a moral sense, is to lie, and also to deceive; and the latter meaning is attached to it here by *Drusius*, *Piscator*, and *Grotius*, *non falleret*, it will not deceive, *i.e.*, disappoint. — *Ed.*

^{ft24} What is here said is very true; but the words are not the same in Hebrew. The first signifies delay, [**תַּמְחָה**] rendered “linger” in ^{<011916>} Genesis 19:16; 43:10. The other verb, [**רָחַח**], means, to put

off, to postpone: and the sense is, that the vision will not be *after* the appointed time. So the two lines may be thus rendered:

*If it will delay, wait for it,
For coming it will come, it will not be postponed;*

or, be after, *i.e.*, the appointed time.

Dr. Wheeler, quoted by *Newcome*, give the right idea, by the following paraphrase:

It shall not be later than its season.

Both *Jerome* and *Marckius* have found a grammatical difficulty in this verse from a mistake as to the gender of [חזון], vision; and they had been evidently led astray by the Septuagint; in which the gender is changed, and the phrase, “wait for it,” is rendered, “wait for him,” ὑπομεινον αὐτον; and so as to what follows, “for he that cometh (ἐρχομενος) shall come.” But [חזון] is the masculine gender; it is elsewhere connected with verbs in that gender. See <090301> 1 Samuel 3:1, <261222> Ezekiel 12:22. Indeed the whole tenor of the passage admits not of any other construction. It is probable that this mistake made *Eusebius* and *Augustine* to apply this verse to Christ, and some to Nebuchadnezzar, in a typical sense. — *Ed.*

^{ft25} Most authors agree in the main with *Calvin* in his exposition of this clause. The whole verse is quoted by Paul in <581039> Hebrews 10:39, nearly *verbatim* from the Scriptures; only he inverts the clauses, and leaves out the pronoun, “my,” connected with “faith.” But this clause, as quoted by him, is materially different from the Hebrew text, as it now exists, though the chief difference relates to the word [עפלה], rendered elation, or pride, by *Calvin* and many others. Two MSS. give another reading; one has [עולפה], and the other, [עלפה], which means to swoon, or to faint, or to fail.

This reading would essentially harmonize the passage, and the context evidently favors it, as well as the antithesis in the verse itself. As to the rest of the clause the *meaning* is same with the Septuagint version, as cited by Paul, though the words are different; and there are other examples in which the apostle did not alter that version, though varying in words, when the sense was preserved. To say that man’s soul is not right in him amounts to the same thing as to say that God is

not pleased with him. There is indeed one MS. which has [נפשי], “my soul,” and not “his soul;” and then [שרה] is often rendered ἄρεσκειν, to please, by the Septuagint. See ^{<042327>}Numbers 23:27; ^{<143004>}2 Chronicles 30:4. There would in this case be a complete identity of words as well as of meaning.

What especially countenances these readings is, that the alteration would agree better with the preceding verse. There is an exhortation to wait for the vision, *i.e.*, its fulfillment. To refer to pride in this connection seems not suitable; but to mention fainting or failing through unbelief is quite appropriate; and then as a contrast to this state of mind, the latter clause is added. Adopting the main alteration, [עלפה] instead of [עפלה], (only a transposition of two letters,) I would render the verse thus —

*Behold the fainting! not right is his soul within him;
But the righteous, by his faith shall he live.*

The word for “fainting” is in the feminine gender, either on account of the word “soul” in what follows, or [איש] is understood, the “man of fainting,” instances of which are adduced by *Henderson* on this verse, though he retains the word of the present text; as [אני תפלה], “I am prayer,” instead of “I am a man of prayer.” — Psalms 109:4; see ^{<240103>}Jeremiah 1:31,32; ^{<270923>}Daniel 9:23.

Now not only the antithesis is here complete, but the *order* also in which it occurs corresponds with what is often the style of the Prophets; the first part of the first clause corresponds with the last part of the second, and the last of the former with the first of the latter; and not according to Dr. *Henderson*, who represents the clauses as regularly antithetic. See a similar instance in chapter 1:13, and also in the first verse of this chapter. The man who faints, and he who lives by faith, form the contrast; and the addition “by faith” in the latter clause implies the fainting to be through want of faith, or through unbelief. Then the soul that is not right stands in contrast with the righteous, or the just in the second line. Thus every thing in the verse itself, and in its connection with what precedes it, is in favor of what has been proposed. And *Grotius* and *Newcome* seemed disposed to adopt this reading. — *Ed.*

ft26 Though the general meaning of the beginning of this verse is what most critics agree in, yet the construction is difficult. The only difference as to the meaning is, whether the proud man is said to be given to wine, or is compared to such an one, or to wine itself. *Newcome* takes the first, and gives this version —

*Moreover, as a mighty man transgresseth through wine,
He is proud, and remaineth not at rest.*

Henderson, agreeing with *Grotius* and *Mede*, takes the latter sense, and renders the line as follows: —

*Moreoever wine is treacherous;
The haughty man stayeth not at home.*

This is rather a paraphrase than a version; but this is the meaning of which the words are most capable. The two first participles need not be connected according to what *Calvin* proposes. Then the distich may be thus rendered —

*And truly, as wine is treacherous,
So is the proud man, and he will not rest.*

Then follows a delineation of his character —

*Because he enlarges as the grave his desire,
And he is like death and cannot be satisfied;
For he gathers to himself all the nations,
And collects to himself all the people.*

As to wine being treacherous, see <203001> Proverbs 30:1. Wine is pleasant to the taste and inviting in its color, but degrading, when taken immoderately, in its effects; so a proud and arrogant man is at first glittering and plausible, and splendid in his appearance, but afterwards cruel and oppressive. This seems to be the most obvious similitude, as contained in the passage.

Parkhurst renders the two first lines as follows —

*Yea, as when wine deceiveth a man,
So he is proud, and is not at rest.*

He interprets “proud,” as meaning “intoxicated with power and dominion,” and refers to <270430> Daniel 4:30. — *Ed.*

ft27 This can hardly be allowed; for in this case the final letter of the previous word must have been [𐤒] and not [𐤓]. It is a word evidently in apposition, designing the character of the proverb and the taunt, they

being enigmas, conveyed in a highly figurative language. The whole verse may be thus rendered —

*Shall not these, all of them,
Raise against him a proverb and a taunt —
Enigmas for him;
Yea, say will every one —*

*“Woe to him who multiplies what is not his own! how long!
“And to him who accumulates on himself thick clay!”*

To render the last word [עבטיט], (or [עב טיט]), apart, as given by ten MSS.,) “pledges,” as it is done by *Newcome* and *Henderson*, does not comport at all with the rest of the passage. The Septuagint favor the common explanation, and also the *Vulgate*, and most commentators. — *Ed.*

^{ft28} It is rendered impersonally by *Jerome* “et dicetur — and it shall be said.” *Junius* introduces a question, and supposed the just, who lives by faith to be referred to — “And shall not he, *i.e.*, the just, say?” But *Marckius* considers that God is the speaker — “And he, *i.e.*, God, shall say.” But the most obvious construction is, that each one of the nations previously mentioned is introduced as speaking — “Unusquisque illorum — every one of them,” is understood, says *Piscator*. — *Ed.*

^{ft29} This is rendered by *Henderson*, “that have lent thee on usury;” but incorrectly, as the corresponding clause is found in the following, and not, as he says, in the preceding line. The literal version is as follows, —

*Shall not suddenly arise thy biters,
And awake thy tormentors,
And thou become for spoils to them?*

Now, the two corresponding words are “biters” and “tormentors;” and the idea of lending on usury cannot be admitted; and the common meaning of the word [נשך], is to bite, and means lending on usury only in Hiphil. What the Septuagint gives is δακνοντες — biters.

Here is an instance of the peculiar manner of the Prophets, and also of the writers of the New Testament; the most obvious act is mentioned first “arise,” and then what is previous to it, “awake.” There is also a similar difference in “biters” and “tormentors,” or those who vex and harass: to torment or vex is not so great an evil as to bite, as it were, like a serpent; for such is the biting meant here. — *Ed.*

ft30 So *Grotius*, *Drusius*, and *Henderson* regard the passage: the land, and the city, are supposed to have been used poetically for lands and cities. The word rendered “violence,” [כּוֹזֵב], means an unjust or wrong act done by force, an outrage, a violent injustice: hence *Grotius* rightly renders it here, “direptionem — robbing, pillaging, or plundering.” While *Newcome* and others apply the passage to Judea and Jerusalem, the Septuagint version would lead us to suppose that Babylon was intended. The view taken here would be the most probable, were it not that the words are repeated at the end of verse 17; and there clearly they refer to the land of Judea and Jerusalem. — *Ed.*

ft31 Literally, “sinning thy soul.” We have in <200836> Proverbs 8:36, [חַטָּאִי], “my sinner,” rendered no doubt correctly, “he that sinneth against me.” So here “sinning thy soul,” means “sinning against thy soul.” See the same words in <202002> Proverbs 20:2. In <041638> Numbers 16:38, the preposition [ב] is before “souls.” “Thy soul hath sinned,” as given by the Septuagint, and adopted by *Newcome*, does not convey the meaning; for to sin against our souls, is to injure ourselves so as to bring down judgment, as in the case mentioned in <041638> Numbers 16:38, while the other phrase conveys only the idea of doing what is wrong. — *Ed.*

ft32 The word rendered here “Wood,” *lignum*, is [כּוֹפֵי], and only found here. The Septuagint has *κωνθαρος*, a beetle, — *Sym.* *συνδεσμος*, bond, tie, or joint, — *Theod.* *ἔνδεσμος*, bandage or jointing. The context shows that it must be something connected with wood-building. *Parkhurst* says, that it is a verb in Syriac, and means to connect, to fasten together, and he renders it a beam or a rafter, which would exactly suit this place. The word, [מֵעֵץ], “from the wood,” evidently means the wood-building or wood-work. So that *tabulatum*, a story or a chamber in a building, as rendered by *Calvin*, is not amiss. Perhaps the best version would be, —

And the beam from the wood-work answers it.

Bochart says, that [כּוֹפֵי], in Rabbinical writings, means a brick, and that it was usual formerly, as it was in this country not long ago, to build with bricks and wood or timber together; and *Henderson* has adopted this meaning, but the other is more satisfactory. — *Ed.*

ft33 The construction of the first line of this verse, as given by *Calvin*, is stiff and unnatural. There is no doubt but that [הנה] is a pronoun in the plural number, and so it has been taken by the Septuagint, ταυτα, these things, and such is the rendering of the Syriac and Arabic versions. No improvement, perhaps, can be made on *Newcome*'s rendering of this verse, —

*Are not these things from Jehovah God of hosts,
That people should labor for the fire,
And nations should weary themselves for a vain thing?*

The intimation is, that all the buildings erected by blood and prepared by iniquity, were destined for the fire. “For the fire,” [בדי אש], literally is, for the supply of fire, as *Parkhurst* renders the phrase: then it is, for the supply of emptiness or vacuity, [ברי ריק].

The last two lines, with some variety, are found in ^{<245158>}Jeremiah 51:58, and applied to Babylon. In Jeremiah, “for a vain thing,” is in the first line, and “for the fire” is in the second. Jeremiah puts the less evil first, and the greatest last; but Habakkuk's usual manner is the reverse, which has been before noticed, and we find an instance in the preceding verse, where he mentions “blood” first, and in the next line, “iniquity.”

That the destination of Babylon for the fire is here meant, seems evident from the following verse. See ^{<245125>}Jeremiah 51:25. — *Ed.*

ft34 The idea is nearly the same, though not the words. The verse in Isaiah is literally this —

*For fill the earth shall the knowledge of Jehovah,
Like the waters spreading over the sea.*

The verb rendered “cover” here and in Isaiah is, [כסה], which means first to spread, and in the second place to cover, as the effect of spreading. It is followed here by [על], over, and by [ל], over, in Isaiah; and so spreading must be the idea included in the verb. The comparison in Isaiah is between knowledge and waters, and the earth and the sea. Hence the common version does not properly present the comparison. The verb [מלש], is used in a passive and active sense. See ^{<010613>}Genesis 6:13, and ^{<010122>}Genesis 1:22; 24:16. This verse may be rendered in *Welsh* word for word, without changing the order in one instance: —

*Canys henwa y ddaear wybodaeth o Jehova,
Vel y dyvroedd dros y more yn ymdaenu.*

“The knowledge of Jeohovah,” [דעה את־יהוה], is not an instance of a genitive case by juxtaposition, which is common both in Hebrew and in Welsh; for [את] here must be a preposition, “from,” for it is sometimes used for [מאת]. It is a knowledge that was to come from Jeohovah, and not a knowledge of Jeohovah. — *Ed.*

ft35 There is no reason to doubt but that this is the meaning of the sentence here: and it is a striking instance of the variety of meaning which belongs to similar expressions, when differently connected. The glory of God is manifested by judgments as well as by mercies. In Isaiah it is “the knowledge of or from Jeohovah;” here the expression is, “the knowledge of the glory of Jeohovah.” By “the knowledge of Jeohovah” is to be understood the revelation made by the gospel. But by “the knowledge of his glory” is meant evidently the display of his power in destroying Babylon, as power is often signified by glory. — *Ed.*

ft36 The rendering of this verse has been various, though most agree as to its import. *Grotius*, *Marckius*, and *Henderson*, take nearly the same view of its meaning as *Calvin*, regarding it as metaphorical. But *Marckius* thinks that the drunkenness which the king of Babylon produced, means the evils which he inflicted on other nations. To make a nation drunk was to subdue and oppress it. See <235117> Isaiah 51:17,22; <242515> Jeremiah 25:15,16, 27,28; 51:7,39,57. This view is confirmed by the following verse, where the king of Babylon is threatened with a similar judgment; he was also to drink of the cup of Jeohovah’s right hand. As he made other nations drunk, so the Lord threatens him with a like visitation.

The verse will admit of a much simpler rendering than what has been commonly offered, such as the following: —

*Woe to him who makes his neighbor to drink,
Who adds his bottle, and also strong drink,
In order that he may look on their nakedness.*

To render [חמה], wrath, or heat, or gall, or poison, as some have done, is to introduce an idea foreign to the context, and the word is often found to signify the bottle of skin in which wine was kept. *Newcome* renders it “flagon.” By mentioning bottle, abundance of wine was

probably intended, and to this abundance was added the strong drink, [שכר], intoxicating liquor. It is commonly rendered as though it were a verb in Hiphil; but it is not so. It means here no doubt, as in other places, strong drink. This line is only an application, as we find often in the Prophets, of the preceding line.

Though there is no MS. which has “his” instead of “thy” connected with “bottle,” yet the preceding and the following lines seem to require it; and this is the reading of *Symmachus* and of the *Vulgate*. The change of persons, it is true, is very common in the Prophets, but not in such a way as we find here, the third person being adopted both in the preceding and in the following line.

The idea of drinking as a judgment may have arisen from the cup of malediction given to criminals before their execution. See also Psalms 75:8. Babylon is in ^{<245107>} Jeremiah 51:7, represented as “a golden cup” in God’s hand to make the nations drunken. It was “golden” to signify an outward appearance that was plausible, and alluring. So the mystic Babylon is said to have a golden cup, which was full of all abominations, ^{<661704>} Revelation 17:4. — *Ed.*

^{ft37} The view presented here of the first clause of the verse is striking, and such as the words may admit. But most commentators attach to them another meaning. *Newcome*’s version is —

Thou art filled with shame instead of glory.

Henderson’s rendering is —

Thou art filled with shame, not with glory.

The verb being in the past tense seems to favor *Calvin*’s view — “Thou hast been satiated with shame from glory,” that is, thou hast been filled to satiety with the shame occasioned to others, arising from the pursuit of thine own glory. And then, as *Calvin* justly observes, his punishment is denounced. — “Drink thou also.” — *Ed.*

^{ft38} The verb [תסוב], loosely expressed here, is very correctly rendered by *Henderson* “shall come round;” and this is the idea which *Calvin* suggests in the following explanation. — *Ed.*

^{ft39} It is commonly derived from [ק], a contraction of [קיא], a vomit or spewing, and [קלוז], shame. Compounds are no common things in Hebrew; and these are found separate in nine MSS. The *Septuagint*

have ἀτιμία, reproach only; and the *Vulgate*, “vomitus ignominiae — the spewing of shame.” *Newcome* renders it “foul shame,” and *Henderson* “great ignominy,” regarding it as a reduplicate noun for [קל קליו]. But as drunkenness is the metaphor used, “shameful spewing,” or the spewing of shame or of reproach is most suitable to the passage. — *Ed.*

^{ft40} It is commonly agreed, that Libanus here means either the temple or the land of Judah; most probably the last, according to the opinion of *Jerome*, *Drusius*, and others. The “violence,” or outrage, of Libanus, means the violence *done* to it, as *Newcome* and others render the clause. The next line is more difficult: if the verb be retained as it is, we must either adopt what *Calvin* has proposed, and after him *Drusius*, or take the [ו] at the beginning as a particle of comparison, according to what is done by *Henderson*, “As the destruction of beasts terrifieth them.” But to preserve the parallelism of the two lines, it would be better to adopt the correction of all the early versions, *Sept. Arab. Syr.* and also of the *Chald. par.*; which substitute [ו] for [ו] and make the verb to be [והיהוה]: and there are two MSS. which have [והיהוה]. In this case the rendering would be the following —

*Because the violence done to Libanus shall overwhelm thee;
And the depredation done to the beasts shall rend thee;
On account of the blood of men, and of violence to the land,
To the city, and to all who dwelt in it.*

The reason men are called “beasts” is because Libanus is mentioned which was inhabited by beasts; and in the two following lines the statement is more clear, and according to the order usually observed, “the depredation done to beasts” is “the blood of men;” and “the violence to Libanus” is “violence to the land.” And then, as it is often the case in the Prophets, there is an addition made to the two last lines, “To the city,” etc. — *Ed.*

^{ft41} Rightly to understand this verse, it is necessary to remember that the graven and the molten image was the same; it was first graven and then covered with some metal, either of gold or of silver. See Note on <330101> Micah 1:7, volume 3, p. 167.

This verse, as given in our version and in that of *Newcome*, presents hardly a meaning; and *Henderson* is not justified in the peculiar sense

he gives to the particle [כ], taking it as a relative pronoun. The rendering of *Calvin* gives an evident and a striking sense. The verse may be thus literally rendered —

18. *What avails the graven image? —
For its graver has formed it, —
The molten image and the teacher of falsehood?
For trust in it does the former of its form,
After having made dumb idols.*

The last line show that the singular number before used is to be taken in a collective sense: and the preposition [ל] before an infinitive has sometimes the meaning of “after.” See ^{<021901>}Exodus 19:1, “When he has made,” etc., is the rendering of *Grotius*. — *Ed.*

^{ft42} With the exception of the clause, “It will teach,” there is a general agreement in the mode of rendering this verse. “Shall it teach,” is *Newcome’s* version. *Henderson* considers it to be ironical, “It teach!” *Grotius* agrees with *Calvin*, “It will itself teach thee,” that is, that it is deaf, and no god. I regard the verse as capable of a simpler and more literal rendering, as follows:

19. *Woe to him who saith to the wood, “Awake, Arise;”
To the dumb stone, “It will teach:”
Behold, it is covered with gold and silver!
Yet there is no breath within it.*

The two verbs, “Awake, Arise,” stand connected with “wood,” and they are so given in the Septuagint; and there is a striking contrast between the dumb stone and teaching. — *Ed.*

CHAPTER 3

^{ft43} The more correct rendering here would be, “A Prayer (or rather, An Intercession) by Habakkuk the Prophet;” that is, It was a prayer composed by him. The preposition [ל] before Habakkuk, as often before David in the Psalms, would be better rendered in this way, than by “of;” for the meaning is, not that it was his prayer, that is, one offered up by him, but that it was composed by him. “A Psalm of David,” ought to be, “A Psalm by David.” — *Ed.*

^{ft44} This explanation, adopted by *Calvin*, is derived originally from *Aquila* and *Symmachus*, who rendered the phrase, ἐπι ὀνοματων, —

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

ft45 The verb, “territus sum, — I feared,” has been omitted. It is even omitted in the French version. — *Ed.*

ft46 The view given of “the middle of the years,” is ingenious and striking; but the common interpretation is, that “the years” of calamity, allotted to the Jews, are meant. The *Septuagint* version of this verse is so extremely wide of the original, that none can account for the differences. There are no various readings of any moment; and the literal rendering of this verse, and of the former part of the following, I consider to be this, —

2. *O Jehovah! I have heard thy report;
I feared, O Jehovah!
Thy work! in the midst of the years revive it;
In the midst of the years make it known;
In anger remember mercy:*

3. *May God from Teman come
And the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah.*

It is called “thy report,” as it was a report which came from God; the allusion is to the threatenings in chapter 1. “The report from thee,” would convey the sense. The third line is a prayer; and so are the following lines, though all the verbs are in the future tense, while that

for “revive” is in the imperative mood. The third verse ought to end with the word “Selah.” What follows in the other part and in the subsequent verses, is a relation of what took place when God had formerly interfered in behalf of Israel; while here, and in the latter part of the preceding verse, the Prophet expresses a prayer to God in reference to his people, and borrows his language from the past interpositions of God. — *Ed.*

^{ft47} The word [סלה] is found 70 times, as *Parkhurst* says, in the Psalms, and thrice in this chapter. “It was most probably,” he adds, “a *note of music*, or a direction to the singers in the temple service to *raise* their voices or instruments where it is inserted.” The opinion of *Gesenius* is the same, it being a direction, as he says, “to repeat the preceding verse in a *louder* strain.” It is always rendered by the Septuagint Διὰ ψαλμοῦ, which means a variation in singing.

Some have rendered the word pause, but it cannot be so considered, for it occurs at the *end* of at least three of the Psalms. There seems to be no regularity in its adoption. In some of the Psalms it occurs once, in some twice, in others thrice, and in one psalm four times.

Calvin has not referred, in his comment, to the latter part of this verse, which, according to his Latin, may be thus translated, —

*Cover the heavens did his glory;
With his praise full was the earth.*

Both glory and praise here are to be taken as signifying their manifestations. The reference is made to the displays of divine majesty on mount Sinai. The original may be thus rendered —

*Cover the heavens did his shining,
And his lustre filled the earth. — Ed.*

^{ft48} That [קרן] means to irradiate or to shine, is clear from ^{<023429>}Exodus 34:29,30,35; “for shine did the skin of his face,” [כִּי קָרוֹ עוֹר פָּנָיו]. Most critics consider that the noun here, though in this sense in no other instance, means rays, or beams of light; and this corresponds with the description given elsewhere of God’s appearance on mount Sinai. *Drusius*, *Marckius*, *Newcome*, and *Henderson*, render it “rays.” The line then would literally be —

Rays from his hand were to him.

or, to retain the English idiom.

He had rays from his hand.

To render the line, “Rays streamed from his hand,” is to give a paraphrase.

The objection of *Calvin* as to the next line, seems not valid; for the hiding of strength may refer to the hand, or to the place, Sinai, whether we render the previous word, rays or horns; — to the place, if we retain our present reading, [עֹזָה], “of its strength;” but to the hand, if we adopt the reading of *many* copies, [עֹזוֹ] “of his strength,” which is perhaps the most accordant with the passage. — *Ed.*

^{ft49} Most agree in the view given of this verse, only there is some shade of difference as to the word [רָשַׁף]; but though *Calvin* renders it *carbo ignitus* — ignited coals, yet in his exposition he seems to regard it with many others as a burning disease. In the six other instances in which the word occurs, it certainly has not this sense, except it be in ^{<053224>}Deuteronomy 32:24, which is doubtful. It signifies not a burning coal, but a glowing fire, burning or lightening. Compare ^{<020923>}Exodus 9:23,25, with ^{<197848>}Psalm 78:48; where it designates the fires or lightnings produced by thunder, which accompanied the hail. Lightning would be its most proper rendering here; for instead of referring this verse to the plagues in Egypt, it may be considered as a continuation of what is contained in the foregoing verse; and the *Septuagint* and *Theodotion* have rendered [דָּבַר] in the preceding clause, not pestilence, but word — λογος, its most usual meaning. This makes the whole to comport to what we read of God’s appearance on mount Sinai. See ^{<021916>}Exodus 19:16; ^{<053302>}Deuteronomy 33:2. The version then would be this —

*From before him proceeded the word (i.e. the law);
And forth came lightning at his feet.*

Most of the ideas in this, and in the two preceding verses, seem to be similar to those we find in ^{<053302>}Deuteronomy 33:2,3. — *Ed.*

^{ft50} This verse is explained in a very striking manner, but the version is not so strictly correct. It may be thus rendered: —

6. *He stood, and measure the earth;
He looked, and agitated the earth;
And burst themselves open did the perpetual mountains,
Bend down did the hills of ages;
The going of ages were his.*

“The perpetual mountains” are literally “the mountains of perpetuity,” which had remained the same from the beginning. “The hills of ages” might be rendered the hills of antiquity or of old time, [עולם], an indefinite past time. “The goings of ages,” are God’s proceedings, that is, in his works, and may therefore be rendered “deeds;” and they are said to be deeds “of ages,” *i.e.*, of old time, with reference probably to the creation of the world: for he who makes perennial mountains to burst, and perpetual hills to bend downwards, must be their first creator. — *Ed.*

^{ft51} The word [יָנָס] not only means iniquity, but also what iniquity produces, labor, trouble, affliction; and this latter meaning, as allowed by *Newcome* and *Henderson*, is most suitable to it here. The word is so taken in ^{<013518>} Genesis 35:18; ^{<052614>} Deuteronomy 26:14; ^{<280904>} Hosea 9:4. Besides, this meaning makes a correspondence between this and the following line, as will be seen by the following version —

*Under trouble have I seen the tents of Cushan,
Tremble did the curtains of the land of Madian.*

The “curtains” were those used in forming tents, and are used here to designate them. The most obvious reference here is to Cushan, mentioned in ^{<070308>} Judges 3:8,10, as *Calvin* states; yet some consider that it stands for *Cush*, as *Lotan*, in ^{<012620>} Genesis 26:20, is put for *Lot*: and some, as *Gesenius*, say, that the African *Cush* is meant, and others, as *Henderson*, think, that it is the Arabian *Cush*, especially as *Madian* is also mentioned. Still the events recorded in Judges, nearly connected together, favor the opinion adopted by *Calvin*. — *Ed.*

^{ft52} The two first lines present a difficulty in their construction. The most literal is this rendering of *Junius* —

*Did against rivers kindle, O Jehovah —
Against rivers, thy wrath;*

Our language will admit of a similar construction in another form, by inverting the order —

*Did thy wrath against rivers, O Jehovah,
Did it kindle against rivers?*

Some connect the two last lines of the verse with the previous one, thus —

*Was thine indignation against the sea,
When thou didst ride on thy horses,
On thy chariots of salvation?*

But *Calvin* considers them rather as an answer to the previous questions, or as explanatory; and they may be thus rendered —

*When thou didst ride on thy horses,
Thy chariots were those of salvation.*

It is observed by *Henderson*, that “there is no necessity for our understanding either the angels or thunder and lightning by ‘horses’ and ‘chariots.’ They are,” he adds, “merely figurative expressions, designed to carry out the metaphor adopted from military operations.” Or it may be, that the horses and chariots of the Israelites are here meant, as in the 11th verse, the arrows and spears of the people are spoken of as those of God. — *Ed.*

^{ft53} This clause has been variously explained: the interpretation here given has been mostly adopted. In the Barberinean manuscript the whole of this prayer is given in many respects different from the present received text of the Septuagint, and this clause is thus found in it — ἐχορτασας βολιδας της φαρετρας αυτου. It is evident that this idea falls in more with the preceding clause than any other; and the Hebrew will admit of a sense bordering on this with less alteration than any other that has been offered. No version has been given without supposing somethin to be understood. *Newcome* says, that sixteen MSS. read [שבועת]; by leaving out the [ו], it may be a verb in Kal in the past tense, as rendered above, and writers might have easily put down [אמר] for [אזור]. Then the line in Hebrew would be,

[שבעת מטות אזור]

“Thou hast filled with arrows the girdle.”

It is a description of one equipped for battle; his bow was made ready, and he had filled his girdle, that is, his military guide, with arrows; for this girdle the preceding Greek version introduced the quiver, in which

arrows were commonly carried. the word [מטות], means rods or staves, that is, of arrows, as we may take it here. This is the most satisfactory solution of the difficulties connected with this line, of which there have been, as *Henderson* says, more than a hundred interpretation.

The last clause of the verse is thus rendered by *Newcome*, —
Thou didst cleave the streams of the land;

and by *Henderson*, —
Thou didst cleave the earth into rivers.

The words will not admit the first version; the genitive case in Hebrew is always by juxtaposition; here “streams” and “earth” are separated by the verb. The other version contains hardly a meaning. The most literal rendering is that given by *Calvin*, and it afford the best sense. The words will admit of the following, which is materially the same, —
By streams didst thou cleavest the earth.

The allusion evidently to the streams of that water which miraculously issued from the smitten rock, and followed the Israelites in the wilderness. — *Ed.*

^{ft54} Most critics have overlooked the peculiar construction of this verse; but it presents a striking instant of the order in which the Prophets often arrange their ideas. There are two things referred to — the mountains and the waters — and the first verb regards both; the nominative case being anticipated, and the first of the two last lines refers to the waters, and the last to the mountains. This is the literal version, —

*They saw thee, — in pain were the mountains,
The flood of waters passed away,
Utter did the deep its voice,
The height its hands lifted up.*

To construe [רומ] adverbially, “on high,” does not so well comport with the characters of the Hebrew language; and it evidently here refers to the “mountains,” as the “deep” refers to the water. — *Ed.*

^{ft55} There is much beauty and force in this explanation: and accordant with it is the version of *Henderson*. But that of *Newcome* is somewhat different —

*The sun and the moon stood still in their habitation:
By their light thine arrows went abroad;
By their brightness, the lightning of thy spear.*

To avoid the insertion of so many words in italics which are not in the original, I would render the verse thus —

*The sun! the moon! — it stood — she remained stationary,
For light to thine arrows which went forth,
For brightness to the flashing of thy spear.*

The genitive case is often to be rendered as a dative, as in ^{<243135>} Jeremiah 31:35, [לְאוֹר לַיְלִיָּה], “for the light of the night;” that is, “for light to the night.”

There are twelve MSS. which have “and,” [וְ], before “moon:” but it is not wanted, the verb “stood” being singular; and it is followed, as I conceive, by another verb in the singular number, and in the feminine gender, while “stood” is in the masculine, and refers to the moon, and the last refers to the sun; which is sometimes feminine, while moon is ever the masculine. The verb [זָבַל] is not properly to dwell, but to continue fixed, or to remain stationary. The order in our language would be this —

The sun remained stationary, the moon stood. — Ed.

^{ft56} However true is what is said here, it seems not to be the doctrine of this text. The version of *Aquila* and the *Vulgate* have been followed as to the second clause of the verse. The *Septuagint* read, **τοῦ σωσαι τοῦ χριστον σου** — to save thy Christ;” or, according to Alex. cod., “thy Christs — **τοὺς χριστοὺς σου;**” or, according to Barb. MS., “thine elect — **τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς σου.**” Five Hebrew MSS. have [מְשִׁיחִיד], “thine anointed ones.” But if “people” in the preceding line; or it may refer to Joshua and his successors, the singular being used, as it is often done by the Prophets, in the collective sense. The particle [אֶת] before it is not often used as a preposition; and the word [שַׁע] may better be taken here as a verb, according to the *Septuagint*, than as a noun, though as a verb it most commonly occurs in *Hiphil*: but see ^{<092305>} 1 Samuel 23:5; ^{<100806>} 2 Samuel 8:6. The following would then be the version —

*Go forth didst thou to save thy people,
To save thine anointed:
Thou didst smite the head from the house of the wicked,
Emptying out the foundation even to the neck.*

The reference in the two lines is evidently to the rooting out of the Canaanites, and not, as *Newcome* thinks, to the destruction of the firstborn in Egypt. The singular is poetically used for the plural: “head,” instead of heads, or chiefs, etc. The last line seems to be a proverbial saying, signifying an entire demolition, the very foundation being dug up, though so deep as to reach up to man’s neck. There is no MSS. nor version to countenance [צור], “rock,” which *Houbigant* and *Newcome* adopt. — *Ed.*

ft57 The Keri and many MSS. read [פרנין], “his villages;” but there is no need of this change, for the singular is used throughout instead of the plural, until we come to the two following lines; and this proves that the singular is to be taken in a collective sense. *Henderson* renders it “captains,” contrary to the meaning of the word in other parts. It means an open unfortified village, as it were scattered, and without any boundaries. *Ed.*

ft58 *Newcome* and some others, without any authority, read “thy rod;” but conjecture, without some solid reason, cannot be allowed. — *Ed.*

ft59 “To devour the poor in secret,” seems to have an allusion to the practice of wild beasts, who take there prey to their dens to devour it there. The poor her, as in many other places, mean the helpless, such as are destitute of aid or power to resist their enemies. The line may be thus rendered —

Their joy *was*, as it were, to devour the helpless in secret. — *Ed.*

ft60 The word is [חמר], which many have rendered *acervus* — heap; but there is no clear instance in which it has such a meaning. It is without a preposition, and the *Septuagint* render it by a participle, *ταρασσοντας*, which agrees with “horses.” It is singular in Hebrew, and, if a participle, it agrees with the nominative case to the preceding verb, [דרכת], “thou didst guide” or direct. The two lines might then be rendered thus, —

Thou didst guide through the sea thy horses,
Disturbing mighty waters.

Both *Marckius* and *Henderson* think that the passage through the Red Sea is not what is meant; but the subjugation of the Canaanites, conveyed in a language derived from that event. — *Ed.*

^{ft61} The word [אָשַׁר], which *Calvin* renders *ut*, “that,” has occasioned great trouble to critics. *Marckius* reads *qui* — “who,” “Who shall rest,” etc.; *Henderson*, “yet,” “Yet I shall have rest,” etc. But it is never found as an adversative. The construction of this line and the following is very difficult; and many have been the forms in which they have been rendered. The verb [נָוַן] means not only to *rest* from action or labor, but also to *rest* in the sense of remaining or continuing. See ^{<120215>} 2 Kings 2:15, and ^{<230202>} Isaiah 2:2. And were it taken in this latter sense here, there would be a consistency in the whole passage. The Prophet describes first the dread which seized him on hearing the report of God’s vengeance; and then in the two last lines he accounts for his consternation, because he should remain to witness this vengeance; and he proceeds in verse 17 to set forth the effects of it, and in verse 18 he states that he would still rejoice in the God of his salvation. The three verses may be thus rendered, —

*16. I heard, — and tremble did my bowels;
At the voice my lips quivered;
Enter does rottenness into my bones,
And on my own account I tremble;
Because I shall remain to the day of distress,
To his coming up to the people, who shall invade me.*

*17. For the fig-tree shall not shoot forth,
And no produce shall be on the vines;
Fail shall the fruit of the olive,
And the fields, none shall yield food;
Cut off from the fold shall be the sheep,
And no ox shall be in the stalls:*

*18. But as for me, in Jehovah will I rejoice,
I will exult in the God of my salvation.*

“On my own account,” or for myself, [תַּחְתִּי]: the preposition, [תַּחַת], is often taken in this sense; See ^{<101921>} 2 Samuel 19:21, ^{<203021>} Proverbs 30:21. “Invade us” or assault us, or them, the people, [יִגְוֹדֵנוּ]; for [נָוַן] is either us or him, but in our language them, for so we speak of people. “And the fields, none,” etc. There are instances of [לֹא], as here, in which it may be rendered “none” and “nothing.” See

<262038> Ezekiel 20:38, <180621> Job 6:21, 8:9. “In the God,” etc.; it may be rendered, “In my God, my Savior,” as it is in the *Septuagint* and the *Vulgate*. — *Ed.*

ft62 The verb means to *break forth* either in buds, or germs, or shoots, and so to germinate, or to blossom. It is rendered by the *Septuagint* **καρποφορησει**, shall bear fruit. — *Ed.*

ft63 No satisfactory conjectures have been made by any as to the *my* added to this word. Hezekiah says at the end of his prayer, <233820> Isaiah 38:20, [יִנְנְנוּ וְנִנְנוּ], “and my neginoth will we sing,” or play, etc. Our version makes this *my* to refer to the ode or song he made to be played on the neginoth, supposed to have been a stringed instrument. In this case, “my neginoth” means the song he made for the neginoth. Then we might render the words, —

For the leader; my song on the stringed instruments. — **Ed.**

Ft64 *Calvin* makes here a change in the discourse; but the whole to the end of the chapter may be viewed as the parable or the taunt mentioned in verse 6, and the particle *Ho!* may be retained instead of *Wo*. The taunt seems to have been formed so as to have been especially suitable to be used by the Jews.

By regarding the passage in this light, we can understand the sudden change off person in verse 16, if the proposed emendation be disapproved; for we see the same in the former portions of the “taunt.” See 6 and 7, and also 9 and 10. That the reader may see the whole of this passage, containing the “taunt,” in the light in which I am now fully inclined to regard it, it shall be presented to him complete: —

6. Will not these, every one of them, Raise up a proverb concerning him, And a taunt, enigmas for him, and say, — “*Ho!* He increases what is not his! how long! And he accumulates on himself thick clay! —
7. Will they not suddenly rise up — thy biters, And awake — thy tormentors, And thou become booties to them?
8. For thou hast spoiled many nation, And spoil thee shall all the remnant of the people, On account of men’s blood, and of violence To the land, to the city, and to all its inhabitants.”

9. “Ho! he has coveted an evil covetousness to his house, To set on high his nest, In order to save himself from the hand of evil!
—
10. Thou hast consulted shame to thine house, By cutting off many nations And by sinning against thine own soul:
11. For the stone — from the wall it cries, And the beam — from the woodwork it answers it, —
12. ‘Ho! he builds a town by blood, And sets up a city by oppression!’ —
13. Shall nothing *be*, lo! From Jehovah of hosts? Yea, labor shall the people for the fire, And nations — for vanity shall they weary themselves:
14. For filled shall be the earth With the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, Like the waters which spread over the sea.”
15. “Ho! he gives drink to his neighbour! — Thou addest thy bottle and also strong drink, In order to look on their nakedness!
16. Thou hast been filled with reproach rather than with glory: Drink thou also, and be uncovered; Come round to thee shall the cup Of the right hand of Jehovah; And shameful spewing shall be on thy glory:
17. For the violence done to Lebanon — it shall overwhelm thee, And the plunder of beasts — it shall rend thee; On account of men’s blood, and of violence To the land, to the city, and to all its inhabitants.”
18. “What avails the graven image! For its graver — he forms it — Even the molten image and the teacher of falsehood: Yea, trust in it does the former of its form, After having made dumb idols!
19. Ho! he saith to the wood, ‘Arise, Awake;’ To the dumb stone, ‘It will teach?’ Behold it! covered it is with gold and silver, Yet there is no spirit within it! But Jehovah is in his holy temple: Silent at his presence let the whole earth be.”

The “taunt” *may* be deemed as terminating at the end of the 17th verse; but I regard it as continuing to the end of the chapter. The word “neighbour,” in the 15th verse, is a collective singular, meaning every neighbour: hence “their” at the end of the verse. The same may be said of “image” in verse 18, which means every image or images, as “idols” are mentioned afterwards. Such are common instances in the Prophets. “It will teach,” in verse 19, most evidently refers to “the dumb stone” — the idol; for it is expressly called “the teacher of falsehood” in verse 17. — *Ed*