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COMMENTARY

**COMMENTARY
ON THE PROPHET
JONAH**

by John Calvin

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COMMENTARIES

OF JOHN CALVIN

ON THE PROPHET

JONAH

*Now first translated from the original Latin, by the Rev. John
Owen, vicar of Thrussington, Leicestershire.*

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

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

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

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

The fact that Miracles of some sort form a part of the records of false religions and of superstitious times, is no reason for disbelieving the Miracles of Scripture. Almost all errors are imitations of truth, and superstition is man's substitute for true Religion. The existence of a false coin is no evidence that there is no genuine coin, but, on the contrary, proves that it exists. Independently of the general character of the Miracles recorded in Scripture, what has been just stated, their *connection* with

indubitable Prophecies is an argument in their favor, which neither heathen nor Christian superstition is capable of adducing. Both must stand or fall together. If the truth of Prophecies be allowed, then the reality of Miracles cannot with any reason be denied. They are so connected together, that they cannot possibly be separated.

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

“The opinion,” says Dr. *Henderson*, “*which* has been most generally entertained is that which accords to the Book a strictly historical character; in other words, which affirms that it is a relation of facts which actually took place in the life and experience of the Prophet. Nor can I view it in any other light while I hold fast an enlightened belief in the divine authority of the Books composing the Canon of the Old Testament, and place implicit reliance on the authority of the Son of God. Into the fixed and definite character of the Canon I need not here enter, having fully discussed the subject elsewhere; but assuming that all the Books contained in it possess the divine sanction, the test to which I would bring the question, and by which, in my opinion, our decision must be mainly formed, is the unqualified manner in which the personal existence, miraculous fate, and public ministry of JONAH are spoken of by our Lord. He not only explicitly recognizes the prophetic office of the son of Amittai, (Ἰωνᾶ του προφητου,) just as he does that of Elisha, Isaiah, and

Daniel, but represents his being in the belly of the fish as a real miracle, (το σθημειον,) grounds upon it, as a fact, the certainty of the future analogous fact in his own history; *assumes* the actual execution of the commission of the Prophet at Nineveh; positively asserts that the inhabitants of that city repented at his preaching; and concludes by declaring respecting himself, “Behold! a greater than Jonah is here,” (<401239> Matthew 12:39-41; 16:4.) Now is it conceivable that all these historical circumstances would have been placed in this prominent light, if the person of the Prophet, and the brief details of his narrative, had been purely fictitious? On the same principle that the historical bearing of the reference in this ease is rejected, may not that to the Queen of Sheba, which follows in the connection, be set aside, and the portion in the First Book of Kings, in which the circumstances of her visit to Solomon are recorded, be converted into an allegory, a moral fiction, or a popular tradition? The two eases, as adduced by our Lord, are altogether parallel; and the same may be affirmed of the allusion to Tyre and Sidon, and that to Sodom in the preceding chapter.”

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

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

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

The next Prophet is MICAH; and his Book is especially interesting on account of the prediction it contains of the birth-place of our Savior, and

also of the establishment of his Kingdom, and the spread of his Gospel. The prophecy recorded in the fourth chapter is one of the most splendid in all the Writings of the Prophets. We find the same in the second chapter of ISAIAH; but it is fuller and given more at large by MICAH. The idea of borrowing seems not compatible with the fact, that each declares that what they delivered was conveyed to them by a vision: and there is nothing unreasonable in the thought, that the Divine Spirit communicated the very same things, to a certain extent, to two individual Prophets; and the fact that more, on the same subject, was revealed to one than to the other, seems to favor the notion, that the whole was communicated to each separately.

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

The style of MICAH much resembles, in some respects, the style of HOSEA. His transitions are sometimes abrupt, and the sudden change of persons is not unfrequent. *Lowth* in his Prelections describes him as “being brief in words, sententious, concise, pointed, — sometimes bordering on the obscurity of HOSEA, — in many parts lofty and fervid, and highly poetical.”^{f2t} *Marckius* says, that, “his diction is elegant, not very unlike that of Isaiah.”^{f3t} *Henderson's* account is more extensive, but on the whole just, as well as discriminating, — “His style is concise, yet *perspicuous*,^{f4t} *nervous*, vehement, and energetic; and, in many instances, equals that of ISAIAH in boldness and sublimity. He is rich and beautiful in the varied use of tropical language, indulges in paranomasias, preserves a pure and

classical diction, is regular in the formation of parallelisms, and exhibits a roundness in the construction of his periods, which is not surpassed by his more celebrated contemporary. Both in administering threatenings and communicating promises, he evinces great tenderness, and shows that his mind was deeply affected by the subjects of which he treats. In his appeals he is lofty and energetic. His description of the character of Jehovah, chap. 7:18-20, is unrivalled by any contained elsewhere in Scripture.”

“Some of his prophecies,” says *Newcome*, “are distinct and illustrious ones, as ^{<330212>}Micah 2:12, 13; ^{<330312>}Micah 3:12; 4:1-4, 10; ^{<330502>}Micah 5:2, 3, 4; ^{<330613>}Micah 6:13; 7:8-10. We may justly admire the *beauty* and *elegance* of his manner — ^{<330212>}Micah 2:12, 13; ^{<330401>}Micah 4:1, 2, 3, and particularly the two first lines of verse 4; his *animation*, — ^{<330101>}Micah 1:5, lines 3, 4; ^{<330207>}Micah 2:7, 10, line 1; ^{<330409>}Micah 4:9; his *strength of expression*, — ^{<330101>}Micah 1:6, 8; ^{<330203>}Micah 2:3, lines 3, 4; ^{<330302>}Micah 3:2, 3, 12; ^{<330701>}Micah 7:1, 2, 4, line 1, 19, line 2; his *pathos*, — ^{<330101>}Micah 1:16; ^{<330204>}Micah 2:4; his *sublimity*, — ^{<330101>}Micah 1:2, 3, 4; ^{<330306>}Micah 3:6, 12; ^{<330412>}Micah 4:12, lines 3, 13; ^{<330508>}Micah 5:8; ^{<330601>}Micah 6:1, 9-16; ^{<330716>}Micah 7:16, 17.”

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

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

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

The *second* chapter contains a vivid description of the fierce assailants of NINEVEH, of their success, of the plunder of the city, and of the captivity of its people, with an exultation over the den of lions. To prevent, as it were, any hope of escape, the Prophet, in the *third* chapter, gives, according to CALVIN and many other Commentators, a graphic view of the ransack of the city, as though he were an eye-witness; then he states the reasons for this dreadful overthrow, reminds the Ninevites of what had happened to another powerful and well fortified city, shows the uselessness of resistance, and declares the doom of the city to be irrevocable and irremediable. How wonderfully exact has been the fulfillment of this Prophecy! ^{f5t} Who can contemplate it without acknowledging that He who spoke by the Prophets is the supreme, who rules and overrules all the events of time?

The style of NAHUM has been admired by all critics. *Lowth* says, that “no one of the minor Prophets seems to equal the sublimity, the vehemence and the boldness of NAHUM: besides, his Prophecy is a complete and

finished poem; his exordium is magnificent, and indeed majestic; the preparation for the destruction of Nineveh, and the description of its ruin, and its greatness, are expressed in most vivid colors, and possess admirable perspicuity and fulness.”^{f6t}

This Volume contains a very interesting portion of The Minor Prophets. The History of JONAH is in many respects very instructive.^{f7t} The Prophecies of MICAH are some of the most remarkable in the Old Testament. NAHUM exhibits in language the most awful the vengeance of the Almighty against the enemies of his Church. And readers will find that our Commentator continues to exercise his talents in that capacity with his wonted vigor, penetration, and judgment. An impartial consideration of his labors cannot fail to impress our minds with veneration for his character, and especially with gratitude to the only Giver of all good for having so richly endued his servant, and for having employed him in services so conducive to the interest of true religion. Such was the respect in which he was held by Bishop *Horsley*, whose learning and acuteness were not of an ordinary kind, that in quoting his comment on a portion of the eighteenth chapter of ISAIAH, he calls him” THE VENERABLE CALVIN.”

J.O.

THRUSSINGTON, July 1847.

PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR

At what time Jonah discharged the office of a Teacher, we may in some measure learn from ^{<121401>}2 Kings 14:1 for it is certain that he is the person there mentioned in Sacred history, as he is expressly called the son of Amittai ^{F1}. It is said there that Jeroboam, the son of Joash, had enlarged the borders of his kingdom, from the entrance into Hamath to the sea of the desert, according to the word of Jonah, the servant of God, the son of Amittai, who came from Gath. It was then at that time, or shortly before, that Jonah prophesied. And it is certain that he was not only sent to the Ninevites, but that he also was counted a Teacher among the people of Israel. And the beginning also of his Book seems to intimate what I have said, — that he was an ordinary Prophet among the people of Israel, for it begins with a copulative, *And the Word of the Lord came to Jonah*. Though the Holy Spirit does in other places speak sometimes in this manner, yet I doubt not but that Jonah intimates that he was recalled from the discharge of his ordinary office, and had a new charge committed to him, — to denounce, as we shall see, on the Ninevites a near destruction.

We must now then understand, that Jonah taught among the people of Israel, but that he received a command to go to the Ninevites. Of this command we shall take notice in its proper place; but it is right that we should know that he was not then only made a Prophet, when he was given as a Teacher to the Ninevites, but that he was sent to the Ninevites after having for some time employed his labors for God and his Church.

This Book is partly historical and partly didactic. For Jonah relates what happened to him after he had attempted to avoid the call of God, and what was the issue of his prophecy: this is one thing. But at the same time he mentions the kind of doctrine which he was commanded to proclaim, and he also writes a Song of Thanksgiving. This last part contains doctrines and is not a mere narrative.

I come now to the words.

COMMENTARIES ON THE PROPHET JONAH

CHAPTER 1.

LECTURE SEVENTY-SECOND.

<320101> JONAH 1:1-2

1. Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

1. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad Ionam, filium Amittai, dicendo, Surge, vade Niniveh, ad urbem magnam, et clama contra eam; quia ascendit malitia eorum coram facie mea.

As I have before observed, Jonah seems here indirectly to intimate, ^{F2} that he had been previously called to the office of a teacher; for it is the same as though he had said, that he framed this history as a part of his ordinary function. The word of God then was not for the first time communicated to Jonah, when he was sent to Nineveh; but it pleased God, when he was already a Prophet, to employ him among other nations. It might have been then, that he was sent to Nineveh, that the Lord, being wearied with the obstinacy of his own people, might afford an example of pious docility on the part of a heathen and uncircumcised nation, in order to render the Israelites more inexcusable. They made a profession of true religion, they boasted that they were a holy people; circumcision was also to them a symbol and a pledge of God's covenant; yet they despised all the Prophets, so that their teaching among them was wholly useless. It is then probable that this Prophet was taken away from them, that the Ninevites by their example might increase the sin of Israel, for in three days they turned to God, after Jonah had preached to them: but among the Israelites and their kindred he had, during a long time, effected nothing, when yet his

authority had been sufficiently ratified, and thus, as we have already said, in their favor: for Jonah had predicted, that the kingdom of Israel would as yet stand; and however much they deserved to perish, yet the Lord fulfilled what he had promised by the mouth at his servant. They ought then to have embraced his doctrine, not only because it was divine, but especially because the Lord had been pleased to show his love to them.

I do not indeed doubt, but that the ingratitude of the people was in this manner arraigned, since the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah, and that for a short time, while the Israelites ever hardened themselves in their obstinacy. And hence some have refinedly expounded that passage in [401239](#) Matthew 12:39-41, 'This perverse generation seeketh a sign, and a sign shall not be given to it, except the sign of Jonah the Prophet,' as though this intimated, that the Gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles, inasmuch as Jonah was taken away from his own nation, and was given as a teacher to foreign and heathen nations. They therefore suppose, that we are to understand this as a prophecy respecting the future call of the Gentiles, as though Christ had said, that he would hereafter go to the Gentiles, after having found the wickedness of the chosen people past recovery. But as Christ expressly applies this comparison, we ought not to draw his words here and there ^{F3}. He indeed confines the similitude to one particular thing, that is, "As Jonah had been three days in the whale's bowels, so also he would be three days in the bowels of the earth;" as though he had said, that in this he would be like to Jonah, for he would be a Prophet brought to life again. And this was said designedly by Christ, because he saw that he was despised by the Jews, and that his labors were in vain: "Since ye now hear me not, and regard me as nothing, know that I shall be hereafter a new Prophet, even after my resurrection; so at length I shall begin to speak more effectually both to the Jews and to the Gentiles, as Jonah converted Nineveh, after having returned again to life." This then is the simple meaning of the passage. Hence Jonah was not a type of Christ, because he was sent away unto the Gentiles, but because he returned to life again, after having for some time exercised his office as a Prophet among the people of Israel. They then who say that his going forth was a token of the call of the Gentiles, adduce indeed what is plausible, but it seems to be supported by no solid reason; for it was in fact an extraordinary thing. God, then, had not as yet openly showed what he would do at the coming of Christ. When Naaman the Syrian was

converted to the faith, (<120515>2 Kings 5:15) and a few others, God changed nothing in his ordinary proceedings: for there ever existed the special call of the race of Abraham, and religion was ever confined within the ancient limits; and it remained ever true, that God had not done to other nations as he had to the Jews, for he had revealed to them his judgments, (<19E720>Psalm 147:20.) It was therefore God's will that the adoption of the race of Abraham should continue unaltered to the coming of Christ, so that the Jews might excel all other nations, and differ from them through a gratuitous privilege, as the holy and elect people of God.

Those who adopt the contrary opinion say, that the Ninevites were converted to the Lord without circumcision. This is true; but I know not whether that was a true and legitimate conversion, which is hereafter mentioned; and of this, the Lord being willing, I shall again speak more fully: but it seems more probable, that they were induced by the reproofs and threatening of the Prophet, suppliantly to deprecate the impending wrath of God: hence God once forgave them; what took place afterwards does not clearly appear. It is certainly not probable that the whole city was converted to the Lord: for soon after that city became exceedingly hostile both to the Israelites and the Jews; and the Church of God was by the Ninevites continually harassed with slaughters. Since it was so, there is certainly no reason to think, that they had really and from the heart repented. But I put off a full discussion of this subject until we come to another passage. Let us go on now with our text.

Arise, go to Nineveh, to that great city. Nineveh is called a great city, and not without reason; for it was in circumference, as heathen writers say, 400 stadia: and we shall see that Jonah was three whole days in going through the squares and streets of the city ^{F4}. It hence follows, that it was a very large city, and this all allow. Profane writers call it Ninus, and say that it is a name derived from its founder; for it was Ninus, the son of Betas, who built it. But more correct is their opinion, who think that **נִינְוָה** *Ninue*, is a Hebrew word: and hence what Herodotus and Diodorus, and others of the same class, say, is certainly fabulous, both as to the origin of the city and as to the whole progress of the kingdom, and their legends can easily be disproved by testimonies from holy Scripture. It is at the same time admitted by all, that Nineveh was a very large and a well fortified city. Babylon was afterwards built by Semiramis, who had been the wife of Betas: after her husband's death she wished to show that she also

excelled in mind and industry, and that she had wisdom above her sex. But with regard to the founder of Nineveh, it is certain that the city was first built by Asshur: whether it was enlarged by Ninus, I know not: this, then, I leave as uncertain; for I wish not to contend about what is doubtful. But it is certain, from what Moses has said, that the founder of this city was Asshur, (^{<011011>}Genesis 10:11.)

As to the largeness of the city, even if profane writers had not said a word, the testimony of Jonah ought to be sufficient to us. Now, since he is bidden to go and proceed to Nineveh, the Lord gives him some hope of success. He indeed wrought effectually by the hand of his servant, Nahum; who, though he continued at home, yet prophesied against the Ninevites; but with a different view, and for another end. For as the people were then miserably distressed, and saw the kingdom or monarchy of Assyria in a flourishing state, they must have despaired, had not some solace been afforded them. Hence Nahum showed that God would be a judge against the Ninevites; that though he for a time favored and spared them, there was yet impending over them the dreadful judgment of which he speaks. Nahum, then, was not given as a teacher to the Ninevites, but was only a proclaimer, that the Jews might strengthen their faith by this comfort — that they were not wholly rejected by the Lord, as he would some time avenge their wrongs. The case with Jonah was different: for he was sent to the city itself, to exhort the Ninevites to repent. Now the Lord, by speaking expressly of the largeness of the city, intended thus to prepare him with firmness, lest he should be frightened by the splendor, wealth, and power of that city: for we know how difficult it is to take in hand great and arduous undertakings, especially when we feel ourselves destitute of strength. When we have to do with many and powerful adversaries, we are not only debilitated, but our courage wholly vanishes away. Lest, then, the greatness of Nineveh should fill Jonah with terror, he is here prepared and armed with firmness. “Go then to Nineveh, and let not the power of that monarchy prevent thee to fulfill what I command thee; which is, to show to the Ninevites their sins, and to denounce on them destruction, if they repent not.”

We now then understand why Nineveh was called *a great city*: for had it not been for the reason just stated, it would not have been necessary that this should have been said to Jonah. The Israelites, I doubt not, knew well that it was a large city, and also possessed of strength and of a large

number of men: but the Lord intended to set before his servant what might have been a hindrance to him in the discharge of his office; *Go then to this great city.* In short, God designed in this way to try Jonah, whether he would prefer his command to all the hindrances of this world. And it is a genuine proof of obedience when we simply obey God, however numerous the obstacles which may meet us and may be suggested to our minds, and though no escape may appear to us; yea, when we follow God, as it were with closed eyes, wherever he may lead us, and doubt not but that he will add strength to us, and stretch forth also his hand, whenever need may require, to remove all our difficulties. It was then the Lord's purpose to deal thus with Jonah; as though he had said to him, "remember who I am, and be content with my authority; for I have ready at hand all resources; when any thing stands in your way, rely on my power, and execute what I command thee." This is the import of the passage. Whenever then God demands any service from us, and we at the same time see that what the discharge of our duty demands is either difficult or apparently impossible, let this come to our minds, — that there is not anything in the whole world which ought not to give way to God's command: we shall then gather courage and confidence, nor will anything be able to call us away from our duty and a right course, though the whole world were fighting against God.

It now follows, *Cry against her; for ascended has their wickedness before my presence.* Cry, he says, against her: it was an unpleasant undertaking to cry out against her immediately at the beginning. We indeed know that men take pride in their power: and as there was then but one monarchy in the world, the seat of which was at Nineveh, a teacher could hardly expect to obtain a patient hearing, though he excelled in gracefulness of manner, and had acquired reputation, and brought an agreeable message. But Jonah was a foreigner, one unknown, and destitute of authority; and still more, he was immediately to denounce destruction on the Ninevites, to cry aloud, to reprove, to make a vehement proclamation, to threaten. How difficult was all this? We hence see how hard a command it was when God charged his Prophet to cry against Nineveh.

It is now added, *For their wickedness has ascended to me.* By this clause God strengthens his servant Jonah; as though he said, "Thou wilt not, as an individual, have to contend with them, but I constitute thee as my herald, to summon them to my tribunal." And no doubt it must have served much to animate Jonah, that he had not to deal with the Ninevites

as an individual, but as the messenger of God: and it might also have had an influence on their minds, to know, that though no mortal inflicted punishment for their crimes, they yet could not escape the vengeance of God. This then is the reason why the Lord here declares that he would be the judge of Nineveh. And at the same time he reminds us, that though the Ninevites felicitated themselves, and also gained the plaudits of the whole world on account of their power, yet all this was of no moment, because their wickedness and iniquity had ascended into heaven. When therefore we are reprov'd, there is no reason that we should turn our eyes here and there towards men; we ought instantly to present ourselves to the scrutiny of God; nay, we ought ourselves to take in hand that voluntary examination which God requires. By so doing, we shall not feed our vices by foolishly deceiving ourselves, as hypocrites do, who ever look around them to the right hand and to the left, and never raise up their thoughts to heaven. Let us go on —

<320103> JONAH 1:3	
<p>3. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.</p>	<p>3. Et surrexit Jonas ad fugendum (ut fugeret) Tharsis a facie Jehovae, et descendit Japho, et invenit navem, quae transibat Tharsis, et dedit mercedem (hoc est, naulum pretium vecturae,) et descendit in eam, ut iret cum ipsis (nempe cum mercatoribus vel nautis) in Tharsis a conspectu Jehovae.</p>

Jonah now relates how he sought hiding-places, that he might withdraw himself from the service of God; not that he deceived himself with such a gross notion, as that he would be no longer under the power of God, after having passed over the sea; but he intended to shun, as it were, the light of the present life, by proceeding to a foreign country. He was, no doubt, not only in a disturbed state of mind, when he formed such a purpose, but was utterly confused.

It may be asked, why Jonah thus avoided the command of God. The Jews, indulging in frigid trifles in divine things, say that he feared lest, when he

came to Nineveh, he should be deprived of the prophetic spirit, as though he were not in the same danger by passing over the sea: this is very frivolous and puerile. And further, they blend things of no weight, when reasons sufficiently important present themselves to us.

It was first a new and unusual thing for Prophets to be drawn away from the chosen people, and sent to heathen nations. When Peter was sent to Cornelius, (^{<441017>} Acts 10:17,) though he had been instructed as to the future call of the Gentiles, he yet doubted, he hesitated until he was driven as it were forcibly by a vision. What then must have come to the mind of Jonah? If only on account of one man the mind of Peter was disquieted, so as to think it an illusion, when he was sent a teacher to Cornelius, what must Jonah have thought, when he was sent to a city so populous? Hence novelty, doubtless, must have violently shaken the courage of the holy Prophet, and induced him to retake himself elsewhere, as one destitute of understanding. Again, doubt might have had an influence on him: for how could he have hoped that a people, who were notorious for their licentiousness, would be converted? He had indeed before an experience of the hardness of the chosen people. He had been faithfully engaged in his office, he had omitted nothing to confirm the worship of God and true religion among the people of Israel: but he had effected but little; and yet the Jews had been called from the womb. What then could he hope, when the Lord removed him to Nineveh? for unbridled licentiousness ruled there; there was also there extreme blindness, they had no knowledge of divine worship; in a word, they were sunk in extreme darkness, and the devil in every way reigned there. Doubt then must have broken down the spirit of Jonah, so that he disobeyed the command of God. Still further, the weakness of the flesh must have hindered him from following his legitimate call: “What then? even this, — I must go to the chief city of that monarchy, which at this day treads under its feet the whole earth; I must go there, a man obscure and despised; and then I must proclaim a message that will excite the greatest hatred, and instantly kindle the minds of men into rage; and what must I say to the Ninevites? ‘Ye are wicked men, God can no longer endure your impiety; there is, therefore, a dreadful vengeance near at hand.’ How shall I be received?” Jonah then, being still surrounded by the infirmities of the flesh, must have given way to fear, which dislodged the love of obedience.

And I have no doubt, in my own mind, but that Jonah discussed these things within himself, for he was not a log of wood. And doubtless it was not to no purpose, as I have already said, that he mentions that the city was great. God indeed sought to remove what might prove an hindrance, but Jonah, on the other hand, reasoned thus, — “I see that I am to have a fierce contest; nay, that such a number of people will fall on me, enough to overwhelm me a hundred times, as the Lord has not in vain foretold me that the city is great.” And though he might have had some hope, if they had been chastised, that they would give God his due honor; yet he confesses, that this hindrance came to his mind, which prevented him to proceed in the course of his calling. Hence doubt, as well as the fear of the flesh made Jonah to stumble, and novelty also, as I have already said, must have perplexed him; so that he preferred to go down, as it were, to the grave, than to undertake an office which apparently had no reason in its favor. For why were the Prophets sent, except to effect something by their labor, and to bring forth some fruit? but of this Jonah had no hope. Some authority was also allowed the Prophets, at least they were allowed the liberty of teaching; but Jonah thought that all entrance was closed up against him: and still more, Jonah thought that he was opposing the covenant of the Lord, who had chosen one people only; and he also thought that he was, as it were, fixed to his own land, when he was appointed a Teacher in his own country; he therefore could not remove elsewhere without feeling a great repugnance.

I hence think, that Jonah disobeyed the command of God, partly because the weakness of the flesh was an hindrance, partly because of the novelty of the message, and partly because he despaired of fruit, or of success to his teaching.

But he doubtless grievously transgressed: for the first rule, as to all our actions, is to follow the call of God. Though one may excel in heroic virtues, yet all his virtues are mere fumes, which shine before the eyes of men, except the object be to obey God. The call of God then, as I have said, holds the first place as to the conduct of men; and unless we lay this foundation, we do like him who would build a house in the air. Disordered then will be the whole course of our life, except God presides over and guides us, and raises up over us, as it were, his own banners. As then Jonah subverted the first and the only firm foundation of a right conduct, what could have remained for him? There is then no reason for us to

extenuate his fault, for he could not have sinned more grievously than by forsaking God, in having refused to obey his call: it was, as it were to shake off the yoke; and this he confesses himself.

They therefore very childishly write who wish to be his apologists, since he twice condemns himself — *Jonah rose up to flee from the presence of Jehovah — to go unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah*. Why does he the second time repeat, from the presence of Jehovah? He meant, no doubt, to express here more distinctly his fault: and the repetition is indeed very emphatical: and it also proves clearly that it was not a slight offense, when Jonah retook himself elsewhere when he was sent to Nineveh. He could not indeed have departed from the Lord, for God fills heaven and earth; and, as I have said already, he was not fascinated by so gross an error as to think, that when he became a fugitive, he was beyond the reach of God's hand. What then is to flee from the face of Jehovah, except it be that which he here confesses, that he fled from the presence of God, as though he wished, like runaway servants, to reject the government of God? Since then Jonah was carried away by this violent temptation, there is no reason why we should now try, by some vain and frivolous pretenses, to excuse his sin. This is one thing.

With regard to the word *Tharsis*, or Tharsisa, I doubt not but that it means Cilicia. There are those who think that it is the city Tarsus; but they are mistaken, for it is the name of a country. They are also mistaken who translate it, Sea; for Jonah intended not only to go to sea, but also to pass over into Cilicia, which is opposite to the Syrian Sea. But the Jews called that the Sea of Tarshish, as it appears from many passages, because there was very frequent sailing to that place. As then that transmarine country was more known to them than any other, and as they carried there their merchandise, and in their turn purchased their goods, they called that the Sea of Tarshish, as it is well known, as being near it.

Jonah then intended to flee into Cilicia, when the Lord would have sent him to Nineveh. It is said that he *rose up to flee*, and then, that he *went down to Joppa*, that he *found there a ship*, which was passing over to Tarshish, that he *paid the fare*, that he *went down* into the ship, *to go with them into Cilicia*:^{F5} now by all those expressions Jonah intimates that he was wholly fixed in his purpose, and that it was necessary that he should have been brought back by a strong hand; for he was touched by no

repentance during his journey. Many things may indeed come to our minds when the call of God appears to us too burdensome. There is none of us, when service is to be performed to God, who does not roll this and that in his mind: “What will be the issue? how wilt thou reach the place where thou expectest to be? See what dangers await thee.” For Satan always comes forth, whenever we resolve to obey God; but we are to struggle in this case, and then repel what we see to be contrary to our calling. But Jonah shows that he was obstinately fixed in his purpose of fleeing: for he not only intended to go into Tarshish, but he actually went down to the city Joppa, which was nigh to Judea; and, therefore some think that Tarshish was Africa; but this is strained. Others divine it to be Thunetus or Carthage, as though indeed these cities were built at that time; but men are very bold in dreaming. But what need of giving a new meaning to this word against the most common usage of Scriptures when it is evident enough that Tarshish is Cilicia?

Now, when Jonah went down to Joppa, it was evident that he intended immediately to migrate from the land of Judah, and to pass over the sea: but by saying that he *paid the fare*, that he *went down* into the ship, that he might *go*, — by this gradual progress, he sets before us, as I have said, more fully his own perverseness; so that he admits that he not only resolutely purposed to reject the call of God, but that he also confirmed himself in it: and though there were many things to be done, which might have sometimes forced him to stand still, he yet constantly followed where his perverse and blind impulse led him. There is no doubts then, but that Jonah, in these distinct words sets himself forth as a fugitive, not only by one act, but by many acts.

Now, as to his flight, we must bear in mind what I have before said — that all flee away from the presence of God, who do not willingly obey his commandments; not that they can depart farther from him, but they seek, as far as they can, to confine God within narrow limits, and to exempt themselves from being subject to his power. No one indeed openly confesses this; yet the fact itself shows, that no one withdraws himself from obedience to God’s commands without seeking to diminish and, as it were, to take from him his power, so that he may no longer rule.

Whosoever, then, do not willingly subject themselves to God, it is the same as though they would turn their backs on him and reject his authority that they may no more be under his power and dominion.

It is deserving of notice, that as Jonah represents himself as guilty before the whole world, so he intended by his example to show how great and detestable a sin it is, not to submit to the commands of God, and not to undertake whatever he enjoins, but to evade his authority. That he might then enhance the atrocity of his sin, he shows by his own example that we cannot rebel against God, without seeking, under some pretense or another to thrust him from his throne, and, at the same time, to confine him within certain limits that he may not include heaven and earth within his empire.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast not sent a Jonah to us, when alienated from every hope of salvation, but hast given thy Son to be our Teacher, clearly to show to us the way of salvation, and not only to call us to repentance by threatening and terrors, but also kindly to allure us to the hope of eternal life, and to be a pledge of thy paternal love, — O grant, that we may not reject so remarkable a favor offered to us, but willingly and from the heart obey thee; and though the condition which thou settest before us in thy Gospel may seem hard, and though the bearing of the cross is bitter to our flesh, yet may we never shun to obey thee, but present ourselves to thee as a sacrifice; and having overcome all the hindrances of this world, may we thus proceed in the course of our holy calling, until we be at length gathered into thy celestial kingdom, under the guidance of Christ thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE SEVENTY-THIRD

<320104> JONAH 1:4

4.. But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

4. Et Jehova emisit ventum magnum super mare, et facta est tempestas magna in mari, et navis cogitabit frangi.

Jonah declares here how he had been, as it were, by force brought back by the Lord, when he tried to flee away from his presence. He then says that a *tempest arose in the sea*; but he at the same time tells us, that this tempest did not arise by chance, as ungodly men are wont to say, who ascribe everything that happens to fortune. God, he says, *sent a strong wind on the sea*. Some give this renderings God raised up, deriving the verb from נטל, *nuthel*; but others derive it more correctly from טול, *tul*^{F6}, and we shall presently meet with the same word in the fifth verse. Now as to what took place, he says that there was so great a tempest, that the ship was not far from being broken. When he says, ‘The ship thought to be broken’^{F7} the expression corresponds with the idiom of our language, *la navire cuidoit perir*. But some take the ship for the passengers or the sailors; but this is strained; and we know that our common language agrees in many of its phrases with the Hebrew.

Jonah then meant, that a tempest arose, not by chance, but by the certain purpose of God, so that being overtaken on the sea, he acknowledged that he had been deceived when he thought that he could flee away from God’s presence by passing over the sea. Though indeed the Prophet speaks here only of one tempest, we may yet hence generally gather, that no storms, nor any changes in the air, which produce rain or stir up tempests on the sea, happen by chance, but that heaven and earth are so regulated by a Divine power, that nothing takes place without being foreseen and decreed. But if any one objects, and says that it does not harmonize with reason, that, for the fault of one man, so many suffered shipwreck, or were tossed here and there by the storm: the ready answer to this is, — that though God had a regard only, in a special manner, to the case of Jonah, yet there were hidden reasons why he might justly involve others in the same danger.

It is probable that many were then sailing; it was not one ship only that was on that sea, since there were so many harbors and so many islands. But though the Lord may involve many men in the same punishment, when he especially intends to pursue only one man, yet there is never wanting a reason why he might not call before his tribunal any one of us, even such as appear the most innocent. And the Lord works wonderfully, while ruling over men. It would be therefore preposterous to measure his operations by our wisdom; for God can so punish one man, as to humble some at the same time, and to chastise others for their various sins, and also to try their patience. Thus then is the mouth of ungodly men stopped, that they may not clamor against God, when he so executes his judgments as not to comport with the judgment of our flesh. But this point I shall presently discuss more at large: there are indeed everywhere in Scripture, instances in which God inflicted punishment on a whole people, when yet one man only had sinned. But when some murmur and plead that they are innocent, there is ever to be found a reason why God cannot be viewed as dealing cruelly with them; nay, were he pleased, he might justly treat them with much greater severity: in a word, though God may appear to deal severely with men, he yet really spares them, and treats them with indulgence. Let us now proceed —

<320105> JONAH 1:5

5. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

5. Et timuerunt nautae et vociferati sunt quisque ad deum suum; et projecerunt vasa, quae erant in navi, in mare, ut levaretur ab illis: Jonas autem descenderat in latera navis, et jacebat et dormiebat.

This narrative, in which Jonah relates in order so many circumstances, is not without its use; for, as we shall presently see, he intended to set forth his own insensibility, and to lay it before us as painted before our eyes: and the comparison, which is implied in the circumstances, greatly illustrates the supine and almost brutal security of Jonah.

He says first that *the mariners*^{F8} *were afraid*, and then, that each *cried*, that is, *to his god* and that they *cast out into the sea the lading of the ship*. As then they were all so concerned, was it not marvelous that Jonah, on whose account the sea was stormy, was asleep? Others were busy, they ran here and there in the ship, and spoiled themselves of their goods, that they might reach the shore in safety: they indeed chose to strip themselves of all they had rather than to perish; they also cried to their gods. Jonah cared for nothing, nay, he lay asleep: but whence came such a carelessness as this, except that he was not only become torpid, but that he seemed also to have been deprived of all reason and common feeling? There is no doubt then but that Jonah, in order to show this to have been the case, has here enumerated so many circumstances.

He says that the *mariners were afraid*. We indeed know that sailors are not usually frightened by small or common storms; for they are a hardy race of men, and they are the less afraid, because they daily see various commotions in the air. When, therefore, he says that the sailors were afraid, we hence gather that it was not a moderate tempest, for such does not thus terrify men accustomed by long expert once to all sorts of storms: they, then, who had been previously hardened, were disquieted with fear. He afterwards adds, that *they cried, each of them to his god*. Jonah certainly ought not to have slept so soundly, but that he might rouse himself at almost any moment, for he carried in his heart his own executioner, as he knew that he was a fugitive: for we have said before, that it was not a slight offense for Jonah to withdraw himself from the presence of God; he despised his call, and, as far as he could, cast off the yoke, so as not to obey God. Seeing, then, that Jonah was ill at ease with himself, ought he not to have trembled, even while asleep? But while others cried to their false gods, he either despised, or at least neglected the true God, to whom he knew he was disobedient, and against whom he rebelled. This is the point of the comparison, or of the antithesis. But we at the same time see, how in dangers men are constrained to call on God. Though, indeed, there is a certain impression by nature on the hearts of men as to God, so that every one, willing or unwilling, is conscious that there is some Supreme Being; we yet by our wickedness smother this light, which ought to shine within us. We indeed gladly cast away all cares and anxieties; for we wish to live at ease, and tranquillity is the chief good of men. Hence it comes, that all desire to live without fear and without care; and hence we

all naturally seek quietness. Yet this quietness generates contempt. Hence then it is, that hardly any religion appears in the world, when God leaves us in an undisturbed condition. Fear constrains us, however unwilling, to come to God. False indeed is what is said, that fear is the cause of religion, and that it was the first reason why men thought that there were gods: this notion is indeed wholly inconsistent with common sense and experience. But religion, which has become nearly extinct, or at least covered over in the hearts of men, is stirred up by dangers. Of this Jonah gives a remarkable instance, when he says that the sailors *cried, each of them to his god*. We know how barbarous is this race of men; they are disposed to shake off every sense of religion; they indeed drive away every fear, and deride God himself as long as they may. Hence that they cried to God, it was no doubt what necessity forced them to do. And here we may learn, how useful it is for us to be disquieted by fear; for while we are safe, torpidity, as it is well known, soon creeps over us. Since, then, hardly any one of himself comes to God, we have need of goads; and God sharply pricks us, when he brings any danger, so as to constrain us to tremble. But in this way, as I have already said, he stimulates us; for we see that all would go astray, and even perish in their thoughtlessness, were he not to draw them back, even against their own will.

But Jonah does not simply say, that each cried to God, but he adds, *to his own god*. As, then, this passage teaches, that men are constrained by necessity to seek God, we also, on the other hand, it shows, that men go astray in seeking God, except they are directed by celestial truth, and also by the Spirit of God. There is then some right desire in men, but it goes astray; for none will keep the right way except the Lord directs them, as it has been said, both by his word and his Spirit. Both these particulars we learn from the words of the Prophet: The sailors *feared*; men hardy and almost iron-hearted, who, like the Cyclops, despised God, — these, he says, were *afraid*; and they also cried to God; but they did not cry by the guidance of faith; hence it was, that every one cried to his own god.

When we read this, let it first come to our minds that there is no hope until God constrains us, as it were, by force; but we ought to anticipate extreme necessity by seeking him willingly. For what did it avail the sailors and other passengers, to call once on God? It is indeed probable that, shortly after, they relapsed into their former ungodly indifference; after having been freed from their danger, they probably despised God, and all religion

was regarded by them with contempt. And so it commonly happens as to ungodly men, who never obey God except when they are constrained. Let therefore every one of us offer himself willingly to God, even now when we are in no danger, and enjoy full quietness. For if we think, that any pretext for thoughtlessness, or for error, or for ignorance, will serve as an excuse, we are greatly deceived; for no excuse can be admitted, since experience teaches us, that there is naturally implanted in all some knowledge of God, and that these truths are engraven on our hearts, that God governs our life, — that he alone can remove us by death, — that it is his peculiar office to aid and help us. For how was it that these sailors cried? Had they any new teacher who preached to them about religion, and who regularly taught them that God was the deliverer of mankind? By no means: but these truths, as I have said, had been by nature impressed on their hearts. While the sea was tranquil, none of them called on their god; but danger roused them from their drowsiness. But it is hence sufficiently evident, that whatever excuses they may pretend, who ascribe not to God his glory, they are all frivolous; for there is no need of any law, there is no need of any Scripture, in short, there is no need of any teaching, to enable men to know, that this life is in the hand of God, that deliverance is to be sought from him alone, and that nothing, as we have said, ought to be looked for from any other quarter: for invocation proves that men have this conviction respecting God; and invocation comes from nothing else but from some hidden instinct, and indeed from the guidance and teaching of nature, (*duce ac magistra natura*) This is one thing.

But let us also learn from this passage, that when God is sought by us, we ought not to trust to our own understanding; for we shall in that case immediately go astray. God then must be supplicated to guide us by his word, otherwise every one will fall off into his own superstitions; as we here see, that each cried to his own god. The Prophet also reminds us that multiplicity of gods is no modern invention; for mankind, since the fall of Adam, have ever been prone to falsehood and vanity. We know how much corruption must occupy our minds, when every one invents for himself hideous and monstrous things. Since it is so, there is no wonder that superstitions have ever prevailed in the world; for the wit of man is the workshop of all errors. (*quia ingenium hominis officina est omnium errorum*) And hence also we may learn what I have lately touched upon, — that nothing is worse for us than to follow the impulses of our flesh; for

every one of himself advances in the way of error, even without being pushed on by another; and at the same time, as is commonly the case, men draw on one another.

He now adds, that the *wares were cast out*, that is, the lading of the ship; and we know that this is the last resource in shipwrecks; for men, to save their lives, will deprive themselves willingly of all their goods. We hence see how precious is life to man; for he will not hesitate to strip himself of all he has, that he may not lose his life. We indeed shun want, and many seek death because extreme poverty is intolerable to them; but when they come to some great danger, men ever prefer their life to all their possessions; for what are the good things of this world, but certain additions to our life? But Jonah tells us for another purpose that the ship was lightened, even for this, — that we may know that the tempest was no ordinary commotion, but that the sailors, apprehensive of approaching death, adopted this as the last resource.

Another clause follows: *Jonah had gone down into the sides* ^{F9}, or the side, *of the ship*. Jonah no doubt sought a retreat before the storm arose. As soon then as they sailed from the harbor, Jonah withdrew to some remote corner, that he might sleep there. But this was no excusable insensibility on his part, as he knew that he was a fugitive from the presence of God: he ought then to have been agitated by unceasing terrors; nay, he ought to have been to himself the taxer (*exacter*) of anxiety. But it often so happens, that when any one has sought hiding-places, he brings on himself a stupor almost brutal; he thinks of nothing, he cares for nothing, he is anxious for nothing. Such then was the insensibility which possessed the soul of Jonah, when he went down to some recess in the ship, that he might there indulge himself in sleep. Since it thus happened to the holy Prophet, who of us ought not to fear for himself? Let us hence learn to remind ourselves often of God's tribunal; and when our minds are seized with torpor, let us learn to stimulate and examine ourselves, lest God's judgment overwhelm us while asleep. For what prevented ruin from wholly swallowing up Jonah, except the mercy of God, who pitied his servant, and watched for his safety even while he was asleep? Had not the Lord then exercised such care over Jonah, he must have perished. ^{F10}

We hence see that the Lord often cares for his people when they care not for themselves, and that he watches while they are asleep: but this ought

not to serve to nourish our self-indulgence; for every one of us is already more indulgent to himself than he ought to be: but, on the contrary, this example of Jonah, whom we see to have been so near destruction, ought to excite and urge us, that when any of us has gone astray from his calling he may not lie secure in that state, but, on the contrary, run back immediately to God. And if God be not able to draw us back to himself without some violent means, let us at least follow in this respect the example of Jonah, which we shall in its own place notice. It follows —

<320106> JONAH 1:6	
<p>6. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.</p>	<p>6. Et accessit ad eum magister funis, et dixit ei, Quid tibi, sopite? Surge, clama ad Deum tuum, si forte serenum se exhibeat Deus nobis (alii vertunt, cogitet de nobis, vel gratificetur nobis,) et non pereamus.</p>

Jonah relates here how he was reproved by the pilot or master of the ship ^{F11}, inasmuch as he alone slept, while all the rest were in anxiety and fear. “What meanest thou, fast sleeper?” The pilot no doubt upbraids Jonah for his sleepiness, and reproves him for being almost void of all thought and reflection. *What meanest thou, fast sleeper* ^{F12}, he says; when thou sees all the rest smitten with alarm, how canst thou sleep? Is not this unnatural? *Rise*, then, and *call on thy God*.

We see that where there is no rule of faith a liberty is commonly taken, so that every one goes astray here and there. Whence was it, that the pilot said to Jonah, *Call on thy God*, and that he did not confine him to any certain rule? Because it had been customary in all ages for men to be satisfied with some general apprehension of God; and then every one according to his own fancy formed a god for himself: nor could it have been otherwise, as I have said, while men were not restrained by any sacred bond. All agree as to this truth, that there is some God, and also that no dead idol can do anything, but that the world is governed by the providence and power of God, and further, that safety is to be sought from him. All this, has been received by the common consent of all; but when we come to particulars, then every one is in the dark; how God is to be

sought they know not. Hence every one takes his own liberty: “For the sake of appeasing God I will then try this; this shall be my mode of securing his favor; the Lord will regard this service acceptable; in this way shall all my iniquity be expiated, that I may obtain favor with God.” Thus each invents for themselves some tortuous way to come to God; and then every one forms a god peculiar to himself. There can therefore be no stability nor consistency in men, unless they are joined together by some bond, even by some certain rule of religion, so that they may not vacillate, and not be in doubt as to what is right to be done, but be assured and certainly persuaded, that there is but one true God, and know what sort of God he is, and then understand the way by which he is to be sought.

We then learn from this passage, that there is an awful license taken in fictitious religions, and that all who are carried away by their fancy are involved in a labyrinth, so that men do nothing but weary and torment themselves in vain, when they seek God without understanding the right way. They indeed run with all their might, but they go farther and farther from God. But that they, at the same time, form in their minds an idea of some God, and that they agree on this great principle, is sufficiently evident from the second clause of this verse, *If so be that God will be Propitious to us*. Here the pilot confines not his discourse to the God of Jonah, but speaks simply of a God; for though the world by their differences divide God, and Jonah worshipped a God different from the rest, and, in short, there was almost an endless number of gods among the passengers, yet the pilot says, *If so be that God*, etc.: now then he acknowledges some Supreme God, though each of them had his own god. We hence see that what I have said is most true, — that this general truth has ever been received with the consent of all, — that the world is preserved by the providence of God, and hence that the life and safety of men are in his hand. But as they are very far removed from God, and not only creep slowly, but are also more inclined to turn to the earth than to look up to heaven, and are uncertain and ever change, so they seek gods which are nigh to them, and when they find none, they hesitate not to invent them.

We have elsewhere seen that the Holy Spirit uses this form of speaking, *If so be*, when no doubt, but difficulty alone is intended. It is however probable, that the pilot in this case was perplexed and doubtful, as it is usual with ungodly men, and that he could determine nothing certain as to

any help from God; and as his mind was thus doubtful, he says, that every means of relief were to be tried. And here, as in a mirror, we may see how miserable is the condition of all those who call not on God in pure faith: they indeed cry to God, for the impulse of nature thus leads them; but they know not whether they will obtain any thing by their cries: they repeat their prayers; but they know not whether they pass off into air or really come to God. The pilot owns, that his mind was thus doubtful, *If so be that God will be propitious to us, call thou also on thy God.* Had he been so surely convinced, as to call on the true God, he would have certainly found it to have been no doubtful relief. However, that nothing might be left untried, he exhorted Jonah, that if he had a God, to call upon him. We hence see, that there are strange windings, when we do not understand the right way. Men would rather run here and there, a hundred times, through earth and heaven, than come to God, except where his word shines. How so? because when they make the attempt, an insane impulse drives them in different ways; and thus they are led here and there: “It may be, that this may be useful to me; as that way has not succeeded, I will try another.” God then thus punishes all the unbelieving, who obey not his word; for to the right way they do not keep: He indeed shows how great a madness it is, when men give loose reins to their imaginations, and do not submit to celestial truth.

As to the words, interpreters translate them in different ways. Some say, “If so be that God will think of us;” others “If so be that God will favor us. **אָשׁוּת**, *oshit*, is properly to shine; but when put as here in the conjugation Hithpael, it means to render one’s self clear or bright: and it is a metaphor very common in Scriptures that the face of God is cloudy or dark, when he is not propitious to us; and again, God is said to make bright his face and to appear serene to us, when he really shows himself kind and gracious to us. As then this mode of speaking altogether suits this place, I wonder that some seek extraneous interpretations. ^{F13}

He afterwards adds, *Lest we perish.* Here the pilot clearly owns, that he thought the life of man to be in the power of God; for he concluded, that they must perish unless the Lord brought aid. Imprinted then in the minds of all is this notion or **προληψις**, that is, preconception, that when God is angry or adverse, we are miserable, and that near destruction impends over us; and another conviction is found to be in the hearts of men, — that as soon as the Lord looks on us, his favor and goodwill brings to us

immediate safety. The Holy Spirit does not speak here, but a heathen, and we know too how great is the impiety of sailors, and yet he declares this by the impulse of nature, and there is here no feigning; for God, as I have already said, extorts by necessity a confession from the unbelieving, which they would gladly avoid.

Now what excuse can we have, if we think our safety to be in our own hands, if we depend not wholly on God, and if we neglect him in prosperity, as though we could be safe without his help? These words then, spoken by the sailor, ought to be weighed by us, ‘If so be that God’s face may appear bright to us, and that we perish not. ^{F14} It now follows —

<320107> JONAH 1:7	
7. And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.	7. Et dixit vir (hoc est, quisque) ad socium suum, Venite et jaciamus sortes, ut sciamus ob quam causam F15 malum hoc nobis: et jecerunt sortes, et cecidit sors super Jonam.

Jonah did not without reason mention this, — that the passengers consulted together about casting lots; for we hence learn, that it was no ordinary tempest: it appeared then to be a token of God’s wrath. For, if strong wind arose, it would not have been so strange, for such had been often the case; and if a tempest followed, it would not have been a thing unusual. It must then have been something more dreadful, as it filled men’s minds with alarms so that they were conscious that God was present as an avenger: and we know, that it is not common with ungodly men to recognize the vengeance of Gods except in extreme dangers; but when God executes punishment on sins in an unusual manner, then men begin to acknowledge God’s vengeance.

This very thing, Jonah now bears witness to, *They said then each to his friend, Come, let us cast lots.* Was it not an accustomed thing for them to cast lots whenever a tempest arose? By no means. They had recourse, no doubt, to this expedient, because they knew, that God had not raised up that tempest without some very great and very serious cause. This is one

thing: but I cannot now pursue the subjects, I must therefore defer it until tomorrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that though we are here disquieted in the midst of so many tossings, we may yet learn with tranquil minds to recumb on thy grace and promise, by which thou testifiest that thou wilt be ever near us, and not wait until by a strong hand thou drawest us to thyself, but that we may be, on the contrary, ever attentive to thy providence: may we know that our life not only depends on a thread, but also vanishes like the smoke, unless thou protectest it, so that we may recumb wholly on thy power; and may we also, while in a cheerful and quiet state, so call on thee, that relying on thy protection we may live in safety, and at the same time be careful, lest torpor, which draws away our minds and thoughts from meditating on the divine life, should creep over us, but may we, on the contrary, so earnestly seek thee, morning and evening, and at all times, that we may through life advance towards the mark thou hast set before us, until we at length reach that heavenly kingdom, which Christ thy Son has obtained for us by his own blood. Amen

LECTURE SEVENTY-FOURTH.

We said in yesterday's lecture, that it was a proof of extreme fear, that the sailors and the rest cast lots; for this is not usually done, except men see themselves to be destitute of judgment and counsel.

But it must at the same time be observed, that through error they cast lots: for they did not know, that if God intended to punish each of them, they were worthy even of heavier punishment. They would not indeed have thrown the blame on one man, if each had well considered what he deserved before God. When a calamity happens, it is the duty of every one to examine himself and his whole life before God: then every one, from the first to the last, must confess that he bears a just judgment. But when all demand together who is guilty before God, they thus exonerate themselves, as though they were innocent. And it is an evil that prevails at this day in the world, that every one is disposed to cast the blame on others and all would have themselves to be innocent before God; not that they can clear themselves of every fault, but they extenuate their sins, as though God could not justly pursue them with so much severity. As for instance, when any one perceives that he had in various ways done wrong, he will indeed confess in words that he is a sinner; but were any person to enumerate and bring forward each of his sins he would say, "This is a light offense, that is a venial sin; and the Lord deals not with us with so much strict justice, that he means to bring on us instantly extreme punishment." When there is a slight offense, it is immediately referred to by every one. Thus acted the sailors, of whom Jonah now speaks. Had any one asked, whether they were wholly without fault, every one, no doubt, would have confessed that he was a sinner before God; but yet they cast lots as though one only was exposed to God's judgment. How so? because they did not think that their own sins deserved so heavy a punishment. How much soever they might have offended, — and this they really felt and were convinced of, — they yet did not make so much of their sins as to think that they deserved any such judgment. This then is the reason why they come to the lot; it was, because every one seemed to himself to be blameless when he came to examine himself.

This passage, then, shows what is even well known by common experience, — that men, though they know themselves to be guilty before

God, yet extenuate their sins and promise themselves pardon, as though they could make an agreement with God, that he should not treat them with strict justice, but deal with them indulgently. Hence, then, is the hope of impunity, because we make light offenses of the most grievous sins. Thus we find under the Papacy, that various modes are devised, by which they absolve themselves before God and wipe away their stains: the sprinkling of holy water cleanses almost all sins; except a man be either an adulterer, or a murderer, or a sorcerer, or ten times perjured, he hardly thinks himself to be guilty of any crime. Then the expiations which they use, avail, as they think, to obliterate all iniquities. Whence is this error? Even because they consider God to be like themselves, and think not their sins to be so great abominations before God. But this is no new thing; for we see what happened in the time of Jonah; and from profane histories also we may learn, that this error possessed everywhere the minds of all. They had then daily expiations, as the Papists have their masses, their pilgrimages, their sprinklings of holy water, and similar playthings (*nugas* — trifles, fopperies): but as under the Papacy there are reserved cases, so also in former times, when any one had killed a father or mother, when any one had committed incest, he stood in need of some extraordinary expiation; and if there was any one of great renown on the earth, they applied to him, that he might find out some new kind of expiation. An example of this error is set before us here, when they said, *let us cast lots*. For except they thought that one only was guilty, and not and every one would have publicly confessed his sins, and would then have acknowledged that such was the mass of them as to be enough to fill heaven and earth; but this they did not. One man must have been the offender; but no one came forward with such a confession: hence they cast lots.

It may now be inquired, whether this mode of seeking out the truth was lawful; as they knew not through whose fault the tempest arose, was it right to have recourse to lots? Some have been too superstitious in condemning lots; for they have plainly said, that all lots are wicked. Hence has come the name, lot-drawers; (*sortilegi*) and they have thought that lot-drawers differ nothing from magicians and enchanters. This has proceeded from ignorance, for we know that the casting of lots has been sometimes allowed. And Solomon certainly speaks, as of a common rule, when he says of lots being cast into the bosom, and of the issue being from Jehovah

(^{<201633>} Proverbs 16:33.) Solomon speaks not there of the arts of magic but says that when lots are cast, the event is not by chance but by God's providence. And when Matthias was chosen in the place of Judas, it was done by lot, (^{<440126>} Acts 1:26.) Did the Apostles use this mode presumptuously? No, the Holy Spirit presided over this election. There is then no doubt but that God approved of that casting of lots. So also Joshua had recourse to the lot when the cause of God's displeasure was unknown, though it was evident that God was angry with the people. Joshua, being perplexed by what was unknown, did cast lots; and so Achan was discovered and his sacrilege. That lot no one will dare condemn. Then what I have said is clear enough, that those have been too superstitious who have condemned all casting of lots without exception. But we must yet remember that lots are not to be used indiscriminately. It is a part of the civil law, that when a common inheritance is divided, it is allowed to cast lots: as it belongs not to this or that person to choose, each must take the part which the lot determines. So again it is lawful to cast lot in great undertakings, when men are anywhere sent: and when there is a division of labor, to prevent jealousy when one wishes to choose a certain part for himself, the lot will remove all contentions. A lot of this kind is allowed both by the word of God, and by civil laws. But when any one adopts the lot without any reason, he is no doubt superstitious, and differs not much from the magician or the enchanter. As for instance, when one intends to go a journey, or to take anything in hand, if he throws into his hat a white and a black lot, and says, "I will see whether my going out today will be prosperous;" now this is of the devil; for Satan by such arts deludes wretched men. If then any one makes use of the lot without any just reason, he is, as I have said without excuse.

But as to the other lots, such as we have now noticed, they ought not to be viewed as precedents. For though Joshua used the lot to bring to light the cause for which God was angry with his people, it is not yet right for us to imitate what he did; for Joshua was no doubt led by some peculiar influence to adopt this measure. So also as to Saul, when he cast lots, and his son Jonathan was discovered as the one who had tasted honey, it was an especial example. The same thing must be also said of the lot mentioned here; for as the sailors were trembling, and knew not the cause why the tempest arose, and the fear of shipwreck seized them, they had recourse to the lot. Were we continually to imitate such examples, such a liberty

would not certainly be pleasing, to God, nor consistent with his word. We must therefore bear in mind, that there were some peculiar influences, whenever God’s servants used the lot in doubtful and extreme cases ^{F16}. This then is shortly the answer to the question — Was it lawful for the sailors to cast lots, that they might find out the person on account of whom they were in so much danger? I now proceed to what follows —

<320108> JONAH 1:8-10	
8. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?	8. Et dixerunt ei, Narra nunc nobis quare malum hoc nobis contingerit, quodnam opus tuum et unde venias, quae sit patria tua, et ex quo populosus?
9. And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.	9. Et dixit ad eos Hebraeus ego sum, et Jehovam Deum coelorum ego timeo, qui fecit mare et aridam.
10. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.	10. Et timuerunt viri timore magno, et dixerunt ei, Quare hoc fecisti? Quia noverant viri quod a facie Jehovae ipse fugeret; nam ipsis narraverat.

After the lot fell on Jonah, they doubted not but that he was the guilty person, any more than if he had been a hundred times proved to be so: for why did they cast lots, except that they were persuaded that all doubt could thus be removed, and that what was hid could thus be brought to the light? As then this persuasion was fixed in their minds, that the truth was elicited, and was in a manner drawn out of darkness by the lot, they now inquire of Jonah what he had done: for they took this as allowed, that they had to endure the tempest on his account, and also, that he, by some detestable crime, had merited such a vengeance at Gods hand. We hence see that they cast lots, because they fully believed that they could not otherwise find out the crime on account of which they suffered, and also, that lots were directed by the hidden purpose of God: for how could a certain judgment be found by lot, except God directed it according to his

own purpose, and overruled what seemed to be especially fortuitous? These principles then were held as certain in a manner by men who were heathens, — that God can draw out the truth, and bring it to the light, — and also, that he presides over lots, however fortuitous they may be thought to be.

This was the reason why they now asked what Jonah *had done*. *Tell us*, then, *why has this evil happened to us, what is thy work?* etc. By work here I do not mean what is wrong, but a kind of life, or, as they say, a manner of living. They then asked how Jonah had hitherto employed himself, and what sort of life he followed. For it afterwards follows, *Tell us, whence comest thou, what is thy country, and from what people art thou?* They made inquiries, no doubt, on each particular in due order; but Jonah here briefly records the questions.

I now come to his answer, *He said to them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear Jehovah the God of heaven, Who has created the sea and the dry land* ^{F17}. Here Jonah seemed as yet to evade, yea, to disown his crime, for he professed himself to be the worshipper of the true God. Who would not have said, but that he wished here to escape by a subterfuge, as he set up his own piety to cover the crime before-mentioned? But all things are not here in the first verse related; for shortly after, it follows, that the sailors knew of Jonah's flight; and that he had himself told them, that he had disobeyed God's call and command. There is then no doubt but that Jonah honestly confessed his own sin, though he does not say so. But we know, that it is a mode of speaking common among the Hebrews to add in the last place what had been first said; and grammarians say, that it is ὕστερον προτερον, (last first,) when anything is left out in its proper place and then added as an explanation. When therefore Jonah says that he was *an Hebrew*, and worshipper of the true God, — this tended to aggravate his fault or crime rather than to excuse it: for had he said only, that he was conscious of having done wrong in disobeying God, his crime would not have appeared so atrocious; but when he begins by sayings that known to him was the true God, the framer of heaven and earth, the God of Israel, who had made himself known by a law given and published, — when Jonah made this introduction, he thereby removed from himself all pretenses as to ignorance and misconception. He had been educated in the law, and had, from childhood, been taught who the true God was. He could not then have fallen through ignorance; and further, he did not, as the

others, worship fictitious gods; he was an Israelite. As then he had been brought up in true religion, his sin was the more atrocious, inasmuch as he had fallen away from God, having despised his command, and, as it were, shaken off the yoke, and had become a fugitive.

We now then perceive the reason why Jonah called himself here an Hebrew, and testified that he was the worshipper of the true God. First, by saying that he was an Hebrew, he distinguished the God of Abraham from the idols of the Gentiles: for the religion of the chosen people was well known in all places, though disapproved by universal consent; at the same time, the Cilicians and other Asiatics, and also the Grecians, and the Syrians in another quarter, — all these knew what the Israelites gloried in, — that the true God had appeared to their father Abraham, and then made with him a gratuitous covenant, and also had given the law by Moses; — all this was sufficiently known by report. Hence Jonah says now, that he was an Hebrew, as though he had said, that he had no concern with any fictitious god, but with the God of Abraham, who had formerly appeared to the holy Fathers, and who had also given a perpetual testimony of his will by Moses. We see then how emphatically he declared, that he was an Hebrew: secondly, he adds, *I fear Jehovah the God of heaven*. By the word fear is meant worship: for it is not to be taken here as often in other places, that is, in its strict meaning; but fear is to be understood for worship: “I am not given”, he says, “to various superstitions, but I have been taught in true religion; God has made himself known to me from my childhood: I therefore do not worship any idol, as almost all other people, who invent gods for themselves; but I worship God, the creator of heaven and earth.” He calls him *the God of heaven*, that is, who dwells alone as God in heaven. While the others thought heaven to be filled with a great number of gods, Jonah here sets up against them the one true God, as though he said, “Invent according to your own fancy innumerable gods, there is yet but one, who possesses the highest authority in heaven; for it is he who *made the sea and the dry land*.^{F18}”

We now then apprehend what Jonah meant by these words: he shows here that it was no wonder that God pursued him with so much severity; for he had not committed a slight offense, but a fatal sin. We now see how much Jonah had profited since the Lord had begun severely to deal with him: for inasmuch as he was asleep yea, and insensible in his sin, he would have never repented had it not been for this violent remedy. But when the Lord

roused him by his severity, he then not only confessed that he was guilty, or owned his guilt in a formal manner, (*defunctorie* — as ridding one's self of a business, carelessly;) but also willingly testified, as we see, before men who were heathens, that he was the guilty man, who had forsaken the true God, in whose worship he had been well instructed. This was the fruit of true penitence, and it was also the fruit of the chastisement which God had inflicted on him. If then we wish God to approve of our repentance, let us not seek evasions, as for the most part is the case; nor let us extenuate our sins, but by a free confession testify before the whole world what we have deserved.

It then follows, that the men feared with great fear, and said, *Why hast thou done this?* ^{F19} *for they knew treat he had fled from the presence of Jehovah, for he had told them.* And this is not unimportant — that *the sailors feared with great fear*: for Jonah means that they were not only moved by what he said, but also terrified, so that they gave to the true God his glory. We indeed know that superstitious men almost trifle with their own idols. They often entertain, it is true, strange fears, but afterwards they flatter themselves, and in a manner cajole their own hearts, so that they can pleasantly and sweetly smile at their own fancies. But Jonah, by saying here that they *feared with great fear*, means that they were so smitten, that they really perceived that the God of Israel was a righteous judge, and that he was not such as other nations fancied him to be, but that he was capable of affording dreadful examples whenever he intended to execute his vengeance. We hence see what Jonah means, when he speaks of great fear. At the same time, two things ought to be noticed, — that they feared, because it was easy for them to conclude from the Prophet's words, that the God of Israel was the only creator of heaven and earth, — and then, that it was a great fear, which, as I have said, must be considered as serious dread, since the fear which the unbelieving have soon vanishes.

But with regard to the reproof which the sailors and other passengers gave to Jonah, the Lord returned to him this as a reward which he had deserved. He had fled from the presence of God; he had thus, as we have said taken away from God his supreme power: for what becomes of God's authority when any one of us rejects his commands and flees away from his presence? Since Jonah then sought to shun God, he was now placed before men. There were present heathens, and even barbarians, who rebuked him for his sin, who were his censors and judges. And the same thing we see

happening often. For they who do not willingly obey God and his word, afterwards abandon themselves to many flagrant sins, and their baseness becomes evident to all. As, then, they cannot bear God to be their Master and Teacher, they are constrained to bear innumerable censurs; for they are branded by the reproaches of the vulgar, they are pointed at every where by the finger, at length they are conducted to the gallows, and the executioner becomes their chief teacher. The case was similar, as we see, with Jonah: the pilot had before reproved his torpor, when he said, Do thou also call on thy God; what meanest thou, O sleeper? thou liest down here like a log of wood, and yet thou sees us perplexed and in extreme danger. As, then, the pilot first so sharply inveighed against Jonah, and then all reproved him with one mouth, we certainly find that he was made subject to the condemnation of all, because he tried to deprive God of his supreme power. If at any time the same thing should happen to us, if God should subject us to the reproaches of men when we seek to avoid his judgment, let us not wonder. But as Jonah here calmly answers, and raises no clamor, and shows no bitterness, so let every one of us, in the true spirit of meekness, acknowledge our own sins; when charged with them, were even children our condemners, or were even the most contemptible of the people to rise up against us, let us patiently bear all this; and let us know that these kinds of censurs befall us through the providence of God. It now follows —

<320111> JONAH 1:11-12	
11. Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.	11. Et dixerunt ad eum, Quid faciemus tibi ut resideat mare a nobis? Quia mare ibat (id est, commovebatur,) et erat tempestuosum.
12. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.	12. Et dixit illis, Tollite me, et projicite me in mare, et residebit mare a vobis; quia novi ego, quod propter me tempestas magna haec contingerit super vos (hoc est, sit super vos.)

The sailors asked counsel of Jonah; and hence it appears that they were touched with so much fear as not to dare to do any thing to him. We hence see how much they had improved almost in an instant, since they spared an Israelite, because they acknowledged that among that people the true God was worshipped, the supreme King of heaven and earth: for, without a doubt, it was this fear that restrained them from throwing Jonah immediately into the sea. For since it was certain that through his fault God was displeased with them all, why was it that they did not save themselves by such an expiation? That they then delayed in so great a danger, and dared not to lay hold instantly on Jonah, was an evident proof that they were restrained, as I have said, by the fear of God.

They therefore inquire what was to be done, *What shall we do to thee, that the sea may be still to us?* ^{F20} *for the sea was going*, etc. By going Jonah means, that the sea was turbulent: for the sea is said to rest when it is calm, but when it is turbulent, then it is going, and has various movements and tossings. *The sea, then, was going and very tempestuous.* ^{F21} We hence see that God was not satisfied with the disgrace of Jonah, but he purposed to punish his offense still more. It was necessary that Jonah should be led to the punishment which he deserved, though afterwards, he was miraculously delivered from death, as we shall see in its proper place.

Jonah then answers, *Take me, and throw me into the sea, and it will be still to you.* It may be asked whether Jonah ought to have of his own accord offered himself to die; for it seemed to be an evidence of desperation. He might, indeed, have surrendered himself to their will; but here he did, as it were, stimulate them, “*Throw me into the sea,*” he says; “for ye cannot otherwise pacify God than by punishing me.” He seemed like a man in despair, when he would thus advance to death of his own accord. But Jonah no doubt knew that he was doomed to punishment by God. It is uncertain whether he then entertained a hope of deliverance, that is, whether he confidently relied at this time on the grace of God. But, however it may have been, we may yet conclude, that he gave himself up to death, because he knew and was fully persuaded that he was in a manner summoned by the evident voice of God. And thus there is no doubt but that he patiently submitted to the judgment which the Lord had allotted to him. *Take me, then, and throw me into the sea.*

Then he adds, *The sea will be to you still*. Here Jonah not only declares that God would be pacified by his death, because the lot had fallen upon him, but he also acknowledges that his death would suffice as an expiation, so that the tempest would subside: and then the reason follows — *I know*, he says, *that on my account is this great tempest come upon you*. When he says that he knew this, he could not refer to the lot, for that knowledge was common to them all. But Jonah speaks here by the prophetic spirit: and he no doubt confirms what I have before referred to, — that the God of Israel was the supreme and only King of heaven and earth. This certainty of knowledge, then, of which Jonah speaks, must be referred to his own consciences and to the teaching of that religion in which he had been instructed.

And now we may learn from these words a most useful instruction: Jonah does not here expostulate with God, nor contumeliously complain that God punished him too severely, but he willingly bears his charged guilt and his punishment, as he did before when he said, “I am the worshipper of the true God.” How could he confess the true God, whose great displeasure he was then experiencing? But Jonah, we see, was so subdued, that he failed not to ascribe to God his just honor; though death was before his eyes, though God’s wrath was burning, we yet see, that he gave to God, as we have said, the honor due to him. So the same thing is repeated in this place, *Behold*, he says, *I know that on my account has this great tempest happened*. He who takes to himself all the blame, does not certainly murmur against God. It is then a true confession of repentance, when we acknowledge God, and willingly testify before men that he is just, though, according to the judgment of our flesh, he may deal violently with us. When however we give to him the praise due to his justice, we then really show our penitence; for unless God’s wrath brings us down to this humble state of mind, we shall be always full of bitterness; and, however silent we may be for a time, our heart will be still perverse and rebellious. This humility, then, always follows repentance, — the sinner prostrates himself before God, and willingly admits his own sin, and tries not to escape by subterfuges.

And it was no wonder that Jonah thus humbled himself; for we see that the sailors did the same: when they said that lots were to be cast, they added at the same time, “Come ye and let us cast lots, that we may know why this evil has happened to us.” They did not accuse God, but

constituted him the Judge; and thus they acknowledged that he inflicted a just punishment. And yet every one thought himself to have been innocent; for however conscience might have bitten them, still no one considered himself to have been guilty of so great a wickedness as to subject him to God's vengeance. Though, then, the sailors thought themselves exempt from any great sin, they yet did not contend with God, but allowed him to be their Judge. Since then they, who were so barbarous, confined themselves within these bounds of modesty, it was no wonder that Jonah, especially when he was roused and began to feel his guilt, and was also powerfully restrained by God's hand, — it was no wonder that he now confessed that he was guilty before God, and that he justly suffered a punishment so heavy and severe. We ought then to take special notice of this, — that he knew that on his account the storm happened or that the sea was so tempestuous against them all. The rest we defer until tomorrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God that as thou urgest us daily to repentance and each of us is also stung with the consciousness of his own sins, — O grant, that we may not grow stupid in our vices, nor deceive ourselves with empty flatteries, but that each of us may, on the contrary carefully examine his own life and then with one mouth and heart confess that we are all guilty not only of light offenses, but of such as deserve eternal death, and that no other relief remains for us but thine infinite mercy and that we may so seek to become partakers of that grace which has been once offered to us by thy Son, and is daily offered to us by his Gospel, that, relying on him as our Mediator, we may not cease to entertain hope even in the midst of thousand deaths, until we be gathered into that blessed life, which has been procured for us by the blood of thy only Son. Amen.

LECTURE SEVENTY-FIFTH

<320113> JONAH 1:13-14

13. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

13. Et quaerebant (vel, moliebantur, proprie est fodiebant) viri ut reducerent navem, et non poterant; quia mare ibat et turbulentum erat super eos.

14. Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.

14. Et clamaverunt ad Jehovam, et dixerunt, Obsecro, Jehova, ne quaeso, pereamus propter animam viri hujus, et ne des super nos (hoc est, ne ponas) sanguinem innocentem; quia, tu Jehova, sicuti placitum tibi est, fecisti.

This verse shows that the sailors and the rest were more inclined to mercy, when they saw that the holy Prophet was willing to undergo the punishment which he had deserved. When therefore, he confessed that he was guilty, and refused not to be punished, they became anxious to spare his life, though they were heathens, and also for the most part barbarians: and as each of them could not but be frightened with his immediate danger, the wonder is increased, that they had such regard for the life of one who alone was in fault, and who had now freely confessed this. But the Lord so turned their hearts, that they now saw more clearly how grievous a sin it was to flee away from the call of God, and not to yield obedience, as we have before observed, to his command. Many think that this is a light offense, and readily indulge themselves in it: but it is not in the power of men to weigh sins; the balance is deceitful when men estimate their sins according to their own judgment. Let us then learn to ascribe to God his own honor, — that he alone is Judge, and is far above us, and can alone determine how grievous or how slight any sin is. But common sense, except when men willfully deceive themselves by vain flatteries, clearly

teaches this, — that it is no light offense when we evade the command of God; for, as we have stated, men do thus take away from God his supreme authority; and what is left to God, when he governs not the creatures whom he has formed, and whom he sustains by his power? The Lord, then, designed to show here, that his displeasure could not be otherwise pacified than by drowning Jonah in the sea; though, as we shall presently see, he had something greater in view. But, in the meantime, this is worthy of being observed, — that the Lord intended to make Jonah an example, that all may now know that he is not to be trifled with, but that he ought to be obeyed as soon as he commands any thing.

The word which the Prophet uses has been variously explained by interpreters. **חָתַר**, *chetar*, is properly, to dig; so that some think it to be a metaphorical expression, as rowers seem to dig the sea; and this sense is not unsuitable. Others carry the metaphor still higher, — that the sailors searched out or sought means by which they might drive the ship to land. But the other metaphor, as being less remote, is more to be approved. The Latins call it to toil, (*moliri*) when the rowers not only apply gently their oars, but when they make a greater effort. *The sailors*, then, *toiled to bring back the ship*^{F22}. But for what purpose? To spare the life of the man who had already confessed that he was guilty before God, and that the storm, which threatened them all with a shipwreck, had arisen through his fault: but he says that they could not, for the sea was tempestuous, as we have already seen in our yesterday's lecture.

I come now to the second verse. *They cried*, he says, *to Jehovah and said, We beseech*^{F23}, *Jehovah, let us not perish, we pray, on account of the life of this man, and give not*, that is, lay not, *innocent blood upon us*.^{F24} The Prophet now expresses more fully why the sailors toiled so much to return to port, or to reach some shore, — they were already persuaded that Jonah was a worshipper of the true God, and not only this, but that he was a Prophet, inasmuch as he had told them, as we have seen, that he had fled from the presence of God, because he feared to execute the command which we have noticed. It was therefore pious (*reverentia*) fear that restrained the sailors, knowing, as they did, that Jonah was the servant of the true God. They, at the same time, saw, that Jonah was already standing for his sin before God's tribunal, and that punishment was demanded. This they saw; but yet they wished to preserve his life.

Now this place shows, that there is by nature implanted in all an abhorrence of cruelty; for however brutal and sanguinary many men may be, they yet cannot divest themselves of this feeling, — that the effusion of human blood is hateful. Many, at the same time, harden themselves; but they apply a searing iron: they cannot shake off horror, nay, they feel that they are detested by God and by men, when they thus shed innocent blood. Hence it was that the sailors, who in other respects hardly retained a drop of humanity, fled as suppliants to God, when the case was about the death of man; and they said, **אֵנָה יְהוָה**, *ane Ieve*, ‘We beseech Jehovah:’ and the expression is repeated; which shows that the sailors earnestly prayed that the Lord would not impute this as a sin to them.

We hence see that though these men had never known the doctrine of the law, they were yet so taught by nature that they knew that the blood of man is dear and precious in the sight of God. And as to us, we ought not only to imitate these sailors, but to go far beyond them: for not only ought the law of nature to prevail among us, but also the law of God; for we hear what God had formerly pronounced with his own mouth,

‘Whosoever sheddeth man’s blood, shed shall his blood be,’
(^{<010906>}Genesis 9:6.)

And we know also the reason why God undertakes to protect the life of men, and that is, because they have been created in his image. Whosoever then uses violence against the life of man, destroys, as far as he can the image of the eternal God. Since it is so, ought not violence and cruelty to be regarded by us with double horror? We ought also to learn another thing from this doctrine: God proves by this remarkable testimony what paternal feeling he manifests towards us by taking our life under his own guardianship and protection; and he even proves that we are really the objects of his care, inasmuch as he will execute punishment and vengeance when any one unjustly injures us. We then see that this doctrine on the one side restrains us, that we may not attempt anything against the lives of our brethren; and, on the other side, it assures us of the paternal love of God, so that being allured by his kindness we may learn to deliver up ourselves wholly to his protection.

I now come to the last clause of the verse, *For thou, Jehovah, hast done as it has pleased thee*. The sailors clearly prove here that they did not willingly shed innocent blood. How then can these two things agree, —

that the blood was innocent, and that they were blameless? They adopted this excuse, — that they obeyed God’s decree, that they did nothing rashly or according to their own inclinations, but followed what the Lord had prescribed: though, indeed, God had not spoken, yet what he required was really evident; for as God demanded an expiation by the death of Jonah, so he designed to continue the tempest until he was thrown into the deep. These things the sailors now put forward. But we must notice, that they did not cast the blame on God, as blasphemers are wont to do, who, while they seek to exempt themselves from blame, find fault with God, or at least put him in their own place: “Why then,” they say, “does he sit as a judge to condemn us for that of which he is himself the author, since he has so decreed?” At this day there are many fanatics who thus speak, who obliterate all the difference between good and evil, as if lust were to them the law. They at the same time make a covert of God’s providence. Jonah wished not that such a thing should be thought of the sailors; but as they well understood that God governed the world justly, though his counsels be secret and cannot be comprehended by us, — as, then, they were thus convinced, they thus strengthened themselves; and though they gave to God the praise due to his justice, they at the same time trembled lest they should be guilty of innocent blood.

We now then see how reverently these men spoke of God, and that so much religious fear possessed them, that they did not rob God of his praise, *Thou Jehovah*, they said, *hast done as it has pleased thee* ^{F25}. Do they here accuse God of tyranny, as though he confounded all things without any cause or reason? By no means. They took this principle as granted, — that the will of God is right and just, yea, that whatever God has decreed is beyond doubt just. Being then thus persuaded, they took the will of God as the rule for acting rightly: “As thou, Jehovah, hast done as it seemed good to thee, so we are blameless.” But at the same time it is proper also to add, that the sailors do not vainly talk here of the secret providence of God in order to impute murder to him, as ungodly men and profane cavilers do at this day: but as the Lord made known his purpose to them, they show that the storm and the tempest could not be otherwise calmed and quieted than by drowning Jonah: they therefore took this knowledge of God’s purpose as a certain rule to follow. At the same time they fled, as I have said, to God, and supplicated his mercy, lest in a matter so perplexed and difficult he should involve them in the same

punishment, as they were constrained to shed innocent blood. We now then apprehend the meaning of this passage. Now it follows —

<320115> JONAH 1:15

15. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

15. Et sustulerunt Jonam, et projecerunt in mare; et stetit mare a fervore suo.

Jonah shows here that the tempest arose through his fault; for the issue proved this with certainty. The sailors had not only cast lots, but after Jonah was thrown into the sea the storm calmed, and the sea became still, — this sudden change sufficiently proved that Jonah was the only cause why they were so nearly shipwrecked. For if the sea had not calmed immediately, but after some interval of time, it might have been ascribed to chance: but as the sea instantly rested, it could not be otherwise said than that Jonah was condemned by the judgment of God. He was indeed cast into the sea by the hands of men; but God so presided, that nothing could be ascribed to men, but that they executed the judgment which the Lord had openly demanded and required from them. This, then, is the import of this verse. He now adds —

<320116> JONAH 1:16

16. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

16. Et imuerunt viri timore magno Jehovam, et sacrificarunt sacrificium Jehovae, et voverunt vota.

Jonah now declares what fruit followed; and first, he says, that the sailors feared the true God. He uses here the proper name of God, Jehovah; for, as we have already seen, they were addicted to their own superstitions, as each of them cried to his own god: but it was a false notion; for they went astray after their own superstitions. The Prophet now points out the difference, — that they began to fear the true God. At the same time it may have been, that they afterwards relapsed into their own errors; yet it ought not to be overlooked that the Lord constrained them to entertain such a fear. The Hebrews, as it has been already said, sometimes take fear

in a general sense, as meaning worship. It is said in ^{<121701>}2 Kings 17:1, of the new inhabitants of the land of Canaan, who had been removed from Persia, that they “feared God,” that is, that they imitated the legal rite in sacrifices while worshipping God. But there is an addition in this place, which shows that the meaning is more restricted, for it is said to have been a *great fear*. Then Jonah means that the sailors and the passengers were not only touched with the fear of God, but that they also had the impression that the God of Israel was the supreme King of heaven and earth, that he held all things under his hand and government. This fear no doubt led them to true knowledge so as to know that they were previously deluded, and that whatever the world had invented was mere delusion, and that the gods devised by the fancies of men were nothing else but mere idols. We now then perceive what Jonah means.

But we must here say somewhat more at large of the fear of God. When the Scripture speaks of the fear of God, it sometimes means the outward worship, and sometimes true piety. When it designates the outward worship, it is no great thing; for hypocrites usually perform their ceremonies, and thus testify that they worship God: but yet, as they obey not God with sincerity of heart, nor bring faith and repentance, they do nothing but trifle. But the fear of God is often taken for true piety; and then it is called the beginning or the chief point of wisdom, or even wisdom itself, as it is in ^{<182902>}Job 29:28. The fear of God, then, or that pious regard (*reventia*) by which the faithful willingly submit themselves to God, is the chief part of wisdom.

But it also often happens that men are touched by servile fear, so as to have a desire to satisfy God, while, at the same time, they have even a wish to draw him down from his throne. This servile fear is full of perverseness; for they, at the same time, champ the bridle, as they cannot exempt themselves from his power and authority. Such was this fear of which Jonah speaks; for all those whom he mentions were not suddenly so changed as to devote themselves to the true God: they had not indeed made such a progress as this; it was not such real and thorough conversion of the soul as changed them into new men. How, then, is it said that they feared? even because the Lord extorted from them a confession at the time: it may have been that some of them afterwards made a greater progress; but I speak now generally of the whole. Because then it is said that they feared God, we are not hence to conclude that they really repented, so as

to become wholly devoted to the God of Israel. But yet they were constrained to know and to confess that the God of Israel was the only and the true God. How so? because that dreadful judgment filled them with terror, so that they perceived that he alone was God who had heaven and earth under his command.

We now then see how that fear is to be viewed, of which Jonah speaks. If they afterwards made no farther progress, it only served to condemn them, that these sailors, having perceived by a sure evidence who the only true God was, mingled with the worship of him their wicked and ungodly superstitions, as many do even in our day. The Papists hold this truth in common with us, — that there is one true God, the framer of heaven and earth, yea, they come still nearer, and say that the only-begotten Son of God is our Redeemer; but yet we see how they contaminate the whole worship of God, and turn his truth to a lie; for they blend the worship of God with that of idols, so that there is nothing pure among them. But this main truth is however of great service, when the Lord stretches forth his hand to miserable men; for if there was no conviction of this under the Papacy that the word of God is to be believed, and that Christ the Son of God is the King and Head of the Church, we must have had to employ against them a long circuitous argument; but now an access to them is easy: when we bring against them the Law, and the Prophets, and the Gospel, they are restrained by some measure of reverence, and dare not to reject the authority of the Supreme God. We then see, that this fear is in itself of no great value, if men remain fixed in their own mire; but when it is the Lords purpose afterwards to call them, this fear opens for them the door to true godliness. So it may have been, as I have said, that some of these sailors and passengers had afterwards made better progress. But this fear of itself could have done nothing more than to convict them, so that no excuse could avail them before God's tribunal; for a proof had been given them, by which they might know that there was no other God than He who was then worshipped by the chosen people.

He afterwards adds that they *sacrificed a sacrifice to Jehovah*. ^{F26} They were accustomed before to offer sacrifices to their idols; but now they testified that they worshipped the God of Israel; for this is what sacrifices signify. But it must at the same time be observed that they thereby expressed this confession, that God confirmed the truth of his word. When, therefore, they perceived that this whole affair was ordered by the

will of God, they were constrained to bear witness that he was the true God: this was the end and design of sacrifices.

It may, however, be inquired, whether that sacrifice pleased God. It is certain that whenever men bring forward their own devices, whatever is otherwise worthy of approbation in what they do, it cannot but be corrupted and vitiated by such a mixture; for God, as it is well known, allows of no associate. And we must remember that which is said in Ezekiel, ‘Go ye, sacrifice to the devil, and not to me!’ God there repudiates all the sacrifices which were wont to be offered by the people of Israel, because superstitions were blended with them. God then shows that such a mixture is so disapproved by him, that he chooses rather that the superstitious should wholly give themselves up to the devils than that his holy name should be thus profaned. Hence this sacrifice of itself was not lawful, nor could it have pleased God; but it was, so to speak, by accident and extrinsically that this sacrifice pleased God, — because he designed thus to make known his glory. Though, then, he repudiated the sacrifices themselves, yet it was his will that this act should bear a testimony to his glory: as, for instance, a deed is often vicious with regard to men, and yet in an accidental way it tends to set forth the glory of God.

And this ought to be carefully borne in mind: there is at this day a dispute, yea a fierce contest, about good works: and the Sophists ever deceive themselves by false reasoning; (*παραλογισμῶ* — sophistry) for they suppose that works morally good are either preparatory to the obtaining of grace, or meritorious towards attaining eternal life. When they speak of works morally good, they refer only to the outward deeds; they regard not the fountain or motive, nor even the end. When the heart of man is impure, unquestionably the work which thence flows is also ever impure, and is an abomination before God. When the end also is wrong, when it is not man’s purpose to worship God in sincerity of heart, the deed, however splendid it may appear, is filth in the presence of God. Hence the Sophists are greatly deceived, and are very childish, when they say, that works morally good please God, and are preparatory to grace and meritorious of salvation. But can this be, that a work does not please God, and yet avails to set forth his glory? I answer, that these two things are perfectly consistent, and are in no way so contrary that they cannot be easily reconciled. For God by accident, as I have said, accommodates to his own glory what is in itself vicious; I say, in itself, that is, with respect to men.

Thus even under the Papacy the Christian name serves to the glory of God, for there ever remains some remnant. And how has it happened, that at this time the light of the Gospel has shone forth, and that true religion has been restored at least in many places? Even because the Lord has never suffered true religion to be extinguished, though it has been corrupted: for baptism under the Papacy, the very name of Christ as well as of the Church, and the very form of religion — all these have become wholly useless; but they have accidentally, as I have said, been of great service. When, therefore, we regard the priests (*sacrificos* — the sacrificers) as well as the people, we find nothing but a perverted worship of God; they presumptuously and indiscriminately add their own superstitions and devices to the word of God, and there is nothing pure among them. Since then they thus blend together heaven and earth, they do nothing but provoke God's wrath against themselves.

We now then understand why Jonah says that the sailors and passengers offered sacrifices. We must, at the same time, remember what I have lately said, that sacrifice was, as it were, a symbol of Divine worship: for even from the beginning this notion prevailed among all, that sacrifices were to be offered to none but to God; and heathens in all ages had no other opinion of sacrifices, but that they thus manifested their piety towards their gods. Since then sacrifices have been from the beginning offered to God alone, it follows, that they at this day are wholly inexcusable who join associates to God, and offer their sacrifices to mortals or to angels. How can this be borne in Christians, since heathens have ever confessed that they regarded those as gods to whom they were wont to offer their sacrifices? Now then, since God declares that the chief sacrifice to him is invocations as we read in ^{<190101>}Psalm 1:1, the whole of religion under the Papacy must be perverted, as they pray not only to God but even to creatures: for they hesitate not to flee to Peter or to Paul, yea, to their own saints, real and fictitious, in the same manner as to the only true God. Inasmuch, then, as they rob God of this chief right, we see that they tread under foot the whole of religion by this sacrilege. Since, then, heathen men testified that they worshipped Jehovah, the God of Israel, by their external sacrifice, let us learn at this day not to transfer the rightful honor of God to creatures; but let this honor of being alone prayed to, be wholly and entirely reserved for him; for this, as we have said is the chief and the most valuable sacrifice which he demands and approves.

But Jonah also adds, that the sailors *vowed vows to God*. This is a part of thanksgiving; for we know that the object, not only of the holy fathers, but also of the superstitious, in making vows, has ever been this — to bind themselves to God, and also to express their gratitude, and to make it evident, that they owed to him both their life and every favor bestowed on them. This then has in all ages been the reason for making, vows. When, therefore the sailors vowed a vow to God, they renounced their own idols. They cried before to their gods; but now they understand that they had cried in vain, and without any benefit, as they had to no purpose uttered their cries in the air. Now then they made their vows to the only true God; for they knew that their lives were in his hand.

And here we may easily learn how foolishly the Sophists of our day heap together all passages of Scripture which make any mention of vows; for they think that we are to be overwhelmed by that term alone, when we condemn their false vows. But no one of us has ever denied or does deny, that it is lawful to vows provided it be done according to what the Law and the Gospel prescribes. What we hold is, — that men are not thoughtlessly to obtrude on God what comes uppermost, but that they are to vow what he approves, and also, that they regard a right and just end in vowing, even to testify their gratitude to God. But in common vows which are made, there are the grossest errors, as also in the whole of the Papal worship; for they vow this and that to God indiscriminately, and regard not what the Lord requires or approves: one, on certain days, abstains from meat; another combs not his head: and a third trots away on some pilgrimage. All these things, we know, are rejected by God. And further, when they vow nothing but what God approves, it is yet done for a wrong purpose: for they seek in this way to bind God to themselves, and the diabolical conceit of merits ever possesses their minds. And, lastly, they consider not what they can do; they vow perpetual celibacy when at the same time incontinence burns them; and thus we see that, like the giants, they fight with God himself; and, in the meantime, they allow themselves an unbridled liberty as to whatever they vow.

Let us then know, that whenever the Scripture speaks of vows, we are to take for granted these two principles, — that vows as they appertain to the worship of God, ought not to be taken without any discretion, according to men's fancy, but ought to be regulated and guided by God's rule, so that men may bring nothing to God, except what they know to be

approved by his word, — and then, that they are to keep in view the right end, even to show by this symbol their gratitude to God, to testify that they are preserved by his kindness, as was the case with these sailors, who made a vow because they thought that none but God was their deliverer; and so they testified, that when they came safe to shore, they would make it known that the God of Israel had showed mercy to them. It follows —

<320117> **JONAH 1:17**

17. Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

17. Et paravit Jehova piscem magnum ad vorandum Jonam; et fuit Jonas in visceribus piscis tribus diebus et tribus noctibus.

What the Prophet here briefly relates ought to be carefully weighed by us. It is easily passed over, when we read in a few words that Jonah was swallowed up by a fish, and that he was there three days and three nights: but though Jonah neither amplified or illustrated in a rhetorical manner what is overlooked by us, nor adopted any display of words, but spoke of the event as though it were an ordinary thing, we yet see what the event itself really was: Jonah was cast into the sea. He had been previously not only a worshipper of the true God, but also a Prophet, and had no doubt faithfully discharged his office; for God would not have resolved to send him to Nineveh, had he not conferred on him suitable gifts; and he knew him to be qualified for undertaking a burden so great and so important. As Jonah then had faithfully endeavored to serve God, and to devote himself to him through the whole of his past life, now that he is cast into the sea as one unworthy of the common light, that he is cut off from the society of men, and that he seems unworthy of undergoing a common or an ordinary punishment, but is exiled, as it were, from the world, so as to be deprived of light and air, as parricides, to whom formerly, as it is well-known, this punishment was allotted — as then Jonah saw that he was thus dealt with, what must have been the state of his mind?

Now that he tells us that he was three whole days in the inside of the fish, it is certain that the Lord had so awakened him that he must have endured continual uneasiness. He was asleep before he was swallowed by the fish; but the Lord drew him, as it were, by force to his tribunal, and he must

have suffered a continual execution. He must have every moment entertained such thoughts as these, “Why does he now thus deal with thee? God does not indeed slay thee at once, but intends to expose thee to innumerable deaths.” We see what Job says, that when he died he would be at rest and free from all evils, (<181406> Job 14:6.) Jonah no doubt continually boiled with grief, because he knew that God was opposed to and displeased with him: he doubtless said to himself, “Thou hast to do, not with men, but with God himself, who now pursues thee, because thou hast become a fugitive from his presence.” As Jonah then must have necessarily thus thought within himself of God’s wrath, his case must have been harder than hundred deaths, as it had been with Job and with many others, who made it their chief petition that they might die. Now as he was not slain but languished in continual torments, it is certain that no one of us can comprehend, much less convey in words what must have come into the mind of Jonah during these three days. But I cannot now discuss what remains; I must therefore defer it to the next lecture.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou settest before us this day thy holy Prophet as an awful example of thy wrath against all who are rebellious and disobedient to thee, — O grant, that we may learn so to subject all our thoughts and affections to thy word, that we may not reject any thing that pleases thee, but so learn both to live and to die to thee, that we may ever regard thy will, and undertake nothing but what thou hast testified is approved by thee, so that we may fight under thy banners, and through life obey thy word, until at length we reach that blessed rest which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy only begotten Son, and is laid up for us in heaven through the hope of his Gospel. Amen.

LECTURE EIGHTY-SIXTH

In yesterday's lecture we began to explain the last verse of the first chapter, in which Jonah said, that *a fish was prepared by the Lord*. We stated that it could not have been otherwise but that Jonah, when he was in the inside of the fish, must have felt the most grievous agonies, as though he had been doomed to perpetual death, as long as he was deprived of the enjoyment of God's favor: and this fact will be further explained when his song comes under our consideration.

But now there is a question to be considered and that is whether God created a fish to receive Jonah. The expression, that God *prepared a fish* ^{F27} seems indeed to mean this; for if the fish had already been swimming in the sea, the Prophet might have adopted another mode of speaking and said, that the Lord caused the fish to meet him or that God had sent a fish; for so the Scripture usually speaks: but a fish is said to have been prepared. This doubt may be thus removed, — that though God may not have created the fish, he had yet prepared him for this purpose; for we know that it was not according to the course of nature that the fish swallowed Jonah, and also, that he was preserved uninjured in his inside for three days and three nights. I therefore refer what is said here, that a *fish was prepared*, to the preservation of Jonah: for it is certain that there are some fishes which can swallow men whole and entire. And William Rondelet, who has written a book on the fishes of the sea, concludes that in all probability it must have been the *Lamia*. He himself saw that fish, and he says that it has a belly so capacious and, mouth so wide, that it can easily swallow up a man; and he says that a man in armor has sometimes been found in the inside of the *Lamia*. Therefore, as I have said, either a whale, or a *Lamia*, or a fish unknown to us, may be able to swallow up a man whole and entire; but he who is thus devoured cannot live in the inside of a fish. Hence Jonah, that he might mark it out as a miracle, says that the fish was prepared by the Lord; for he was received into the inside of the fish as though it were into an hospital; and though he had no rest there, yet he was as safe as to his body, as though he were walking on land. Since then the Lord, contrary to the order of nature, preserved there his Prophet, it is no wonder that he says that the *fish was prepared by the Lord*. I come now to the second chapter.

CHAPTER 2.

<320201> JONAH 2:1-2

1. Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,

1. Et oravit Jonas ad Jehovam Deum suum e ventre piscis;

2. And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

2. Et dixit clamavi in angustia mea ad Jehovam, et exaudit me (vel, respondit mihi;) e ventre sepulchri vociferatus sum, audivisti vocem meam. ^{F28}

When Jonah says that he *prayed from the bowels of the fish*, he shows first with what courage of mind he was endued. He had then put on a new heart; for when he was at liberty he thought that he could in a manner escape from God, he became a fugitive from the Lord: but now while inclosed within narrow bounds, he begins to pray, and of his own accord sets himself in God's presence.

This is a change worthy of being noticed: and hence we may learn how much it profits us to be drawn back often as it were by cords, or to be held tied up with fetters because when we are free we go astray here and there beyond all limits. Jonah, when he was at liberty, became, as we have seen, wanton; but now finding himself restrained by the mighty hand of God, he receives a new mind, and prays from the bowels of the fish ^{F29}. But how was it that he directed his petitions then to God, by whose hand he saw that he was so heavily pressed? For God most rigidly handled him; Jonah was in a manner doomed to eternal ruin; the bowels of the fish, as we shall hereafter see, were indeed to him as it were hell or the grave. But in this state of despair Jonah even gathered courage, and was able to retake himself directly to God. It was a wonderful and almost incredible example of faith. Let us then learn to weigh well what is here said; for when the Lord heavily afflicts us, it is then a legitimate and seasonable time for prayer. But we know that the greater part despond, and do not usually offer their prayers freely to God, except their minds be in a calm state; and yet God then especially invites us to himself when we are reduced to

extremities. Let this, then, which Jonah declares of himself, come to our minds, — that he cried to God from hell itself: and, at the same time, he assures us that his prayer proceeded from true faith; for he does not simply say that he prayed to *Jehovah*, but he adds that he was *his God*; and he speaks with a serious and deeply-reflective mind. Though Jonah then was not only like one dead, but also on the confines of perdition, he yet believed that God would be merciful if he fled to him. We hence see that Jonah prayed not at random, as hypocrites are wont to take God's name in their mouths when they are in distress, but he prayed in earnest; for he was persuaded that God would be propitious to him.

But we must remember that his prayer was not composed in the words which are here related; but Jonah, while in the bowels of the fish, dwelt on these thoughts in his mind. Hence he relates in this song how he thought and felt; and we shall see that he was then in a state of distraction, as our minds must necessarily be tossed here and there by temptations. For the servants of God do not gain the victory without great struggle. We must fight, and indeed strenuously, that we may conquer. Jonah then in this song shows that he was agitated with great trouble and hard contests: yet this conviction was firmly fixed in his heart, — that God was to be sought, and would not be sought in vain, as he is ever ready to bring help to his people whenever they cry to him.

Then he says, *I cried, when I had trouble, to Jehovah, and he answered me*. Jonah no doubt relates now, after having come forth from the bowels of the fish, what had happened to him, and he gives thanks to the Lord. ^{F30} This verse then contains two parts, — that Jonah in his trouble fled to God, — and the latter part contains thanksgiving for having been miraculously delivered beyond what flesh could have thought. *I cried*, he says, *in my distress, to Jehovah; I cried out from the bowels of hell, thou hast heard my voice*. Jonah, as we shall hereafter see, directed his prayers to God not without great struggle; he contended with many difficulties; but however great the impediments in his way, he still persevered and ceased not from praying. He now tells us that he had not prayed in vain; and, that he might amplify the grace of God, he says, *from the bowels of the grave*. He mentioned *distress* (*angustiam* — straitness) in the first clause; but here he more clearly expresses how remarkable and extraordinary had been the kindness of God, that he came forth safe from the bowels of the fish, which were like the bowels of the grave. שָׂאוּל, *shaul*, derived from

corruption, is called the grave by the Hebrews, and the Latin translator has almost everywhere rendered it hell, (*infernus*;) and שְׂאוּל, *shaul*, is also sometimes taken for hell, that is, the state of the reprobate, because they know that they are condemned by God: it is, however, taken more frequently for the grave; and I am disposed to retain this sense, — that the fish was like the grave. But he means that he was so shut up in the grave, that there was no escape open to him.

What are the bowels of the grave? Even the inside or the recess of the grave itself. When Jonah was in this state, he says, that he was heard by the Lord. It may be proper to repeat again what I have already slightly touched, — that Jonah was not so oppressed, though under the heaviest trial, but that his petitions came forth to God. He prayed as it were from hell, and not simply prayed, for he, at the same time, sets forth his vehemence and ardor by saying, that he cried and cried aloud. Distress, no doubt, extorted from Jonah these urgent entreaties. However this might have been, he did not howl, as the unbelieving are wont to do, who feel their own evils and bitterly complain; and yet they pour forth vain howlings. Jonah here shows himself to be different from them by saying, that he cried and cried aloud to God. It now follows —

<320203> JONAH 2:3	
<p>3. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.</p>	<p>3. Atqui projeceras me in profundum, in cor marium, et fluvius circumdedit me; omnes conflictus tui (sed hac voce intelligit undas quae inter se conflagunt; scimus enim esse varias collisiones, ideo vertunt aliqui, contritiones tui, nam שָׂאוּל significat proprie conflagunt et frangere; perinde est igitur ac si diceret, omnes fracturae tuae et collisiones super me transierunt, et explicat quid velit, quum dicit) fluctus tui super me transierunt.</p>

In this verse are set forth his difficulties: for Jonah, for the sake of amplifying, refers to his condition. It was a great thing that he cried to God from the bowels of the fish; but it was far more difficult for him to raise up his mind in prayer, when he knew or thought God to be angry with him:

for had he been thrown into extreme evils, he might yet call upon God; but as it came to his mind that all the evil he suffered was inflicted by God, because he tried to shun his call, how was it possible for him to penetrate into heaven when such an obstacle stood in his way? We hence see the design of these words, *But thou hadst cast me into the gulf, into the heart of the sea; the flood surrounded me, all thy billows and waves passed over me.*

In short, Jonah shows here what dreadful temptations presented themselves to him while he was endeavoring to offer up prayers. It came first to his mind that God was his most inveterate enemy. For Jonah did not then think of the sailors and the rest who had cast him into the sea; but his mind was fixed on God: this is the reason why he says, **THOU, Lord, hadst cast me into the deep, into the heart of the sea;** and then, **THY billows, THY waves.** ^{F31} He does not here regard the nature of the sea; but he bestows, as I have already said, all his thoughts on God, and acknowledges that he had to do with him; as though he said, “Thou Lord, in pursuing me, drivest me away; but to thee do I come: thou showest by dreadful proofs that thou art offended with me, but yet I seek thee; so far is it that these terrors drive me to a distance from thee, that now, being subdued as it were by thy goads, I come willingly to thee; for nowhere else is there for me any hope of deliverance.” We now then see how much avails the contrast, when Jonah sets the terrible punishment which he endured in opposition to his prayer. Let us now proceed —

<320204> JONAH 2:4	
4. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.	4. Tunc ego dixi, (nam copula resolvi debet in adverbium temporis,) Expulsus sum a conspectu oculorum tuorum; verum adjiciam aspicere ad templum sanctitatis tuae.

In the first clause of this verse Jonah confirms again what I have said, — that when he sought to pray, not only the door was closed against him, but there were mountains, as it were, intervening, so that he could not breathe a prayer to God: for he did not so much think of the state in which he was; nay, but he chiefly considered his own case, how he had provoked the wrath of God. Hence he says, *I have said, I am cast away from the sight of*

thine eyes. Some give this frigid exposition, that he had been only expelled from his own country, that he might not behold the temple. But I have no doubt but that Jonah tells us here that he suffered extreme agonies, as though every hope of pardon had been cut off from him: “What! shall I yet hope that God will be propitious? It is not to be hoped.” This then is the casting away of which he speaks: for it is said that God casts us away, when he allows us no access to him. Hence Jonah thought that he was wholly alienated from God. Were any to object and say, that then his faith must have been extinct; the obvious answer is, — that in the struggle of faith there are internal conflicts; one thought is suggested, and then another of an opposite character meets it; there would indeed be no trial of our faith, except there were such internal conflicts; for when, with appeased minds, we can feel assured that God is propitious to us, what is the trial of faith? But when the flesh tells us that God is opposed to us, and that there is no more hope of pardon, faith at length sets up its shield, and repels this onset of temptation, and entertains hope of pardon: whenever God for a time appears implacable, then faith indeed is tried. Such then was the condition of Jonah; for, according to the judgment of the flesh, he thought that he was utterly cast away by God, so that he came to him in vain. Jonah, then, having not yet put off flesh and blood, could not immediately lay hold on the grace of God, but difficulties met him in his course.

The latter clause is differently explained by interpreters. Some take it negatively, “I shall no more look towards the temple of thy holiness:” but the words admit not of this explanation. **אכן**, *ak*, means in Hebrew, truly, nevertheless; and it means also, certainly; and sometimes it is taken dubitatively, perhaps. The greater part of expounders render the clause thus, “But I shall see the temple of thy holiness;” as though Jonah here reprov'd his own distrust, which he had just expressed, as the case is with the faithful, who immediately check themselves, when they are tempted to entertain any doubt: “What! dost thou then cast away hope, when yet God will be reconciled to thee if thou wilt come to him?” Hence interpreters think that it is a sort of correction, as though Jonah here changed his mind, and retracted what he had previously taken up, as a false principle derived from the judgment of the flesh. He had said then that he had been cast away from the presence of the Lord; but now, according to these expositors, he repels that temptation, But I shall see thy holy temple; though I seem now to be rejected by thee, thou wilt at last receive

me into favor. We may, however, explain this clause, consistently with the former, in this way, At least, or, *but, I would again see*, etc., as an expression of a wish. The future then may be taken for the optative mood, as we know that the Hebrews are wont thus to use the future tense, either when they pray or express a wish. This meaning then best agrees with the passage, that Jonah as yet doubtfully prays, At least, or, but, I would again, O Lord, see the temple of thy holiness. But since the former explanation which I have mentioned is probable, I do not contend for this. However this may be, we find that Jonah did not wholly despair, though the judgment of the flesh would drive him to despair; for he immediately turned his address to God. For they who murmur against God, on the contrary, speak in the third person, turning themselves, as it were, away from him: but Jonah here sets God before his eyes, *I have been cast away*, he says, *from the sight of thine eyes*. He does not remonstrate here with God, but shows that he was seeking God still, though he thought that he was cast far away.

Then he adds, *I would at least see again the temple of thy holiness*. And by speaking of the temple, he no doubt set the temple before him as an encouragement to his faith. As then he had been cast away, he gathers everything that might avail to raise up and confirm his hope. He had indeed been circumcised, he had been a worshipper of God from his childhood, he had been educated in the Law, he had exercised himself in offering sacrifices: under the name of temple he now includes briefly all these things. We hence see that he thus encouraged himself to entertain good hope in his extreme necessity. And this is a useful admonition; for when every access to God seems closed up against us, nothing is more useful than to recall to mind, that he has adopted us from our very infancy, that he has also testified his favor by many tokens, especially that he has called us by his Gospel into a fellowship with his only-begotten Son, who is life and salvation; and then, that he has confirmed his favor both by Baptism and the Supper. When, therefore, these things come to our minds, we may be able by faith to break through all impediments. Let us go on —

<320205> JONAH 2:5-6

5. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

5. Obsederunt me aquae usque ad animam, abyssus undique circumdedit me, juncus alligatus fuit capite meo:

6. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

6. Ad radices (proprie, excisuras; nam קצב significat excidere; alii vertunt, ad fines extremos; ad radices igitur) montium descendi; terra cum vectibus suis circum me in seculum: et ascendere fecisti vitam meam e sepulchro (est aliud nomen quam שאול, nempe, שדה; alii vertunt, a corruptione, vel, interitu,) Jehova, Deus mi.

Here in many words Jonah relates how many things had happened to him, which were calculated to overwhelm his mind with terror and to drive him far from God, and to take away every desire for prayer. But we must ever bear in mind what we have already stated, — that he had to do with God: and this ought to be well considered by us. The case was the same with David, when he says in <193909> Psalm 39:9, ‘Thou hast yet done it;’ for, after having complained of his enemies, he turned his mind to God: “What then do I? what do I gain by these complaints? for men alone do not vex me; thou, God, he says, hast done this.” So it was with Jonah; he ever set before him the wrath of God, for he knew that such a calamity had not happened to him but on account of his sins.

He therefore says that *he was by waters beset*, and then, that he was *surrounded by the deep*; but at length he adds, that God *made his life to ascend*, etc. All these circumstances tend to show that Jonah could not have raised up his mind to God except through an extraordinary miracle, as his life was in so many ways oppressed. When he says that *he was beset with waters even to the soul*, I understand it to have been to the peril of his life; for other explanations seem frigid and strained. And the Hebrews says that to be pressed to the soul, is to be in danger of one’s life; as the Latins, meaning the same thing, say that the heart, or the inside, or the bowels, are

wounded. So also in this place the same thing is meant, 'The waters beset me even to the soul,' and then, 'the abyss surrounds me.' Some render **סֹפְה**, *soph*, sedge; others sea-weed; others bulrush: but the sense amounts to the same thing. No doubt **סֹפְה**, *soph*, is a species of sedge; and some think that the Red Sea was thus called, because it is full of sedges or bulrushes. They think also that bulrushes are thus called, because they soon putrefy. But what Jonah means is certain and that is, that weed enveloped his head, or that weed grew around his head: but to refer this to the head of the fish, as some do, is improper: Jonah speaks metaphorically when he says that he was entangled in the sedge, inasmuch as there is no hope when any one is rolled in the sedge at the bottom of the sea. How, indeed, can he escape from drowning who is thus held, as it were, tied up? It is then to be understood metaphorically; for Jonah meant that he was so sunk that he could not swim, except through the ineffable power of God.

According to the same sense he says, *I descended to the roots of the mountains*. But he speaks of promontories, which were nigh the sea; as though he had said, that he was not cast into the midst of the sea, but that he had so sunk as to be fixed in the deep under the roots of mountains. All these things have the same designs which was to show that no deliverance could be hoped for, except God stretched forth his hand from heaven, and indeed in a manner new and incredible.

He says that *the earth with its bars was around him*. He means by this kind of speaking, that he was so shut up, as if the whole earth had been like a door. We know what sort of bars are those of the earth, when we ascribe bars to it: for when any door is fastened with bolts, we know how small a portion it is. But when we suppose the earth itself to be like a door, what kind of things must the bolts be? It is the same thing then as though Jonah had said, that he was so hindered from the vital light, as if the earth had been set against him to prevent his coming forth to behold the sun: the earth, then, *was set against me, and that for ever*.

He afterwards comes to thanksgiving, *And thou Jehovah, my God, hast made my life to ascend from the grave*. Jonah, after having given a long description, for the purpose of showing that he was not once put to death, but that he had been overwhelmed with many and various deaths, now adds his gratitude to the Lord for having delivered him, *Thou*, he says, *hast made my life to ascend from the grave, O Jehovah*. He again confirms what

I have once said, — that he did not pour forth empty prayers, but that he prayed with an earnest feeling, and in faith: for he would not have called him his God, except he was persuaded of his paternal love, so as to be able to expect from him a certain salvation. *Thou*, then, *Jehovah, my God*, he says; he does not say, *Thou hast delivered me*, but, *Thou hast brought forth my life from the grave*. Then Jonah, brought to life again, testifies here that he was not only delivered by God’s aid from the greatest danger, but that he had, by a certain kind of resurrection, been raised from the dead. This is the meaning of this mode of speaking, when he says that his life had been brought forth from the grave, or from corruption itself. It follows —

<320207> JONAH 2:7	
7. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.	7. Quum deficeret in me anima mea (vel, dum se convolveret supra me anima mea,) Jehovae recordatus sum, et ingressa est oratio mea ad templum sanctitatis tuae.

Here Jonah comprehends in one verse what he had previously said, — that he had been distressed with the heaviest troubles, but that he had not yet been so cast down in his mind, as that he had no prospect of God’s favor to encourage him to pray. He indeed first confesses that he had suffered some kind of fainting, and that he had been harassed by anxious and perplexing thoughts, so as not to be able by his own efforts to disengage himself.

As to the word עִטַּף, *otheph*, it means in Hebrew to hide, to cover; but in Niphal and Hithpael (in which conjugation it is found here) it signifies to fail: but its former meaning might still be suitably retained here; then it would be, ‘My soul hid or rolled up itself,’ as it is in <19A201>Psalm 102:1, ‘The prayer of the afflicted, when he rolled up himself in his distress.’ They who render it, he multiplied prayers, have no reason to support them. I therefore doubt not but that Jonah here means, either that he had been overcome by a swoon, or that he had been so perplexed as not to be able without a violent struggle to raise up his mind to God. However it may have been, he intended by this word to express the anxiety of his

mind. While then we are tossed about by divers thoughts, and remain, as it were, bound up in a hopeless condition, then our soul may be said to roll or to fold up itself within us. When therefore the soul rolls up itself, all the thoughts of man in perplexity recoil on himself. We may indeed seek to disburden ourselves while we toss about various purposes, but whatever we strive to turn away from us, soon comes back on our own head; thus our soul recoils upon us. We now perceive what Jonah meant by this clause, *When my soul infolded itself*, or failed within me, *I remembered, he says, Jehovah*. We hence learn that Jonah became not a conqueror without the greatest difficulties, not until his soul, as we have said, had fainted: this is one thing. Then we learn, also, that he was not so oppressed with distresses but that he at length sought God by prayer. Jonah therefore retained this truth, that God was to be sought, however severely and sharply he treated him for a time; for the remembering, of which he speaks, proceeded from faith. The ungodly also remember Jehovah, but they dread him, for they look on him as a judge; and whenever a mention is made of God, they expect nothing but destruction: but Jonah applied the remembrance of God to another purpose, even as a solace to ease his cares and his anxieties.

For it immediately follows, *that his prayer had penetrated unto God*, or entered before him.^{F32} We then see that Jonah so remembered his God, that by faith he knew that he would be propitious to him; and hence was his disposition to pray. But by saying that his prayer entered into his temple, he no doubt alludes to a custom under the law; for the Jews were wont to turn themselves towards the temple whenever they prayed: nor was this a superstitious ceremony; for we know that they were instructed in the doctrine which invited them to the sanctuary and the ark of the covenant. Since then this was the custom under the law, Jonah says that his prayer entered into the temple of God; for that was a visible symbol, through which the Jews might understand that God was near to them; not that they by a false imagination bound God to external signs, but because they knew that these helps Had not in vain been given to them. So then Jonah not only remembered his God, but called also to mind the signs and symbols in which he had exercised his faith, as we have just said through the whole course of his life; for they who view him as referring to heaven, depart wholly from what the Prophet meant. We indeed know that the temple sometimes means heaven; but this sense suits not this place. Then

Jonah meant that though he was far away from the temple, God was yet near to him; for he had not ceased to pray to that God who had revealed himself by the law which he gave, and who had expressed his will to be worshipped at Jerusalem, and also had been pleased to appoint the ark as the symbol of his presence, that the Jews might, with an assured faith, call upon him, and that they might not doubt but that he dwelt in the midst of them, inasmuch as he had there his visible habitation.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast once given us such an evidence of thy infinite power in thy servant Jonah, whose mind, when he was almost sunk down into hell, thou hadst yet raised up to thyself, and hadst so supported with firm constancy, that he ceased not to pray and to call on thee, — O grant, that in the trials by which we must be daily exercised, we may raise upwards our minds to thee, and never cease to think that thou art near us; and that when the signs of thy wrath appear, and when our sins thrust themselves before our eyes, to drive us to despair, may we still constantly struggle, and never surrender the hope of thy mercy, until having finished all our contests, we may at length freely and fully give thanks to thee, and praise thy infinite goodness, such as we daily experience that being conducted through continual trials, we may at last come into that blessed rest which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ one Lord. Amen.

LECTURE SEVENTY-SEVENTH

<320208> JONAH 2:8-9	
8. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.	8. Qui observant vanitates mendaces, misericordiam suam (vel, clementiam) derelinquent (hoc est, derelinquent.)
9. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.	9. Ego autem in voce laudis sacrificabo tibi, quae vovi reddam: salus est Jehovae.

Here Jonah says first, that men miserably go astray, when they turn aside to vain superstitions, for they rob themselves of the chief good: for he calls whatever help or aid that is necessary for salvation, the mercy of men. The sense then is that as soon as men depart from God, they depart from life and salvation, and that nothing is retained by them, for they willfully cast aside whatever good that can be hoped and desired. Some elicit a contrary meaning, that the superstitious, when they return to a sound mind, relinquish their own reproach; for **חֶסֶד**, *chesad*, sometimes means reproach. They then think that the way of true penitence is here described, — that when God restores men from their straying to the right way, he gives them at the same time a sound mind, so that they rid themselves from all their vices. This is indeed true, but it is too strained a meaning. Others confine this to the sailors who vowed sacrifices to God; as though Jonah had said, that they would soon relapse to their own follies, and bid adieu to God, who in his mercy had delivered them from shipwreck; so they explain their mercy to be God; but this is also too forced an explanation.

I doubt not, therefore, but that Jonah here sets his own religion in opposition to his false intentions of men; for it immediately follows, *But I with the voice of praise will sacrifice to thee*. Jonah, then, having before confessed that he would be thankful to God, now pours contempt on all those inventions which men foolishly contrive for themselves, and through

which they withdraw themselves from the only true God, and from the sincere worship of him. For he calls all those devices, by which men deceive themselves, *the vanities of falsehood*; ^{F33} for it is certain that they are mere fallacies which men invent for themselves without the authority of God's Word; for truth is one and simple, which God has revealed to us in his world. Whosoever then turns aside the least, either on this or on that side, seeks, as it were designedly, some imposture or another, by which he ruins himself. *They then who follow such vanities, says Jonah, forsake their own mercy,* ^{F34} that is they reject all happiness: for no aid and no help can be expected from any other quarter than from the only true God.

But this passage deserves a careful notice; for we hence learn what value to attach to all superstitions, to all those opinions of men, when they attempt to set up religion according to their own will: for Jonah calls them lying or fallacious vanities. There is then but one true religion, the religion which God has taught us in his word. We must also notice, that men in vain weary themselves when they follow their own inventions; for the more strenuously they run, the farther they recede from the right way, as Augustine has well observed. But Jonah here adopts a higher principle, — that God alone possesses in himself all fullness of blessings: whosoever then truly and sincerely seeks God, will find in him whatever can be wished for salvation. But God is not to be sought but by obedience and faith: whosoever then dare to give themselves loose reins, so as to follow this or that without the warrant of God's word, recede from God, and, at the same time, deprive themselves of all good things. The superstitious do indeed think that they gain much when they toil in their own inventions; but we see what the Holy Spirit declares by the mouth of Jonah. The Lord says the same by Jeremiah

*“They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and cisterns
have they digged for themselves,”* (<240213> Jeremiah 2:13.)

There the Lord complains of his chosen people, who had gone astray after wicked superstitions. Hence, when men wander beyond the word of God, they in a manner renounce God, or say adieu to him; and thus they deprive themselves of all good things; for without God there is no salvation and no help to be found.

Jonah therefore rightly adds, *But I, with the voice of praise, will sacrifice to thee*; as though he said While men as it were banish themselves from God,

by giving themselves up to errors, I will sacrifice to thee and to thee alone, O Lord. And this ought to be observed by us; for as our minds are prone to falsehood and vanity, any new superstition will easily lay hold so us, except we be restrained by this bond, except we be fully persuaded, — that true salvation dwells in God alone, and every aid and help that can be expected by us: but when this conviction is really and thoroughly fixed in our hearts, then true religion cannot be easily lost by us: though Satan should on every side spread his allurements, we shall yet continue in the true and right worship of God. And the more carefully it behoves us to consider this passage, because Jonah no doubt meant here to strengthen himself in the right path of religion; for he knew that like all mortals he was prone to what was false; he therefore encouraged himself to persevere: and this he does, when he declares that whatever superstition men devise, is a deprivation of the chief good, even of life and salvation. It will hence follow, that we shall abominate every error when we are fully persuaded that we forsake the true God whenever we obey not his word, and that we at the same time cast away salvation, and every thing good that can be desired. Then Jonah says, *I will sacrifice to thee with the voice of praise.*

It must be noticed here farther, that the worship of God especially consists in praises, as it is said in ^{<190101>}Psalm 1:1: for there God shows that he regards as nothing all sacrifices, except they answer this end — to set forth the praise of his name. It was indeed his will that sacrifices should be offered to him under the law; but it was for the end just stated: for God cares not for calves and oxen, for goats and lambs; but his will was that he should be acknowledged as the Giver of all blessings. Hence he says there, ‘Sacrifice to me the sacrifice of praise.’ So also Jonah now says, I will offer to thee the sacrifice of praise, and he might have said with still more simplicity, “Lord, I ascribe to thee my preserved life.” But if this was the case under the shadows of the law, how much more ought we to attend to this, that is, — to strive to worship God, not in a gross manner, but spiritually, and to testify that our life proceeds from him, that it is in his hand, that we owe all things to him, and, in a word, that he is the Source and Author of salvation, and not only of salvation, but also of wisdom, of righteousness, of power?

And he afterwards mentions his vows, *I will pay*, he says, *my vows*. We have stated elsewhere in what light we are to consider vows. The holy Fathers did not vow to God, as the Papists of this day are wont to do,

who seek to pacify God by their frivolous practices; one abstains for a certain time from meat, another puts on sackcloth, another undertakes a pilgrimage, and another obtrudes on God some new ceremony. There was nothing of this kind in the vows of the holy Fathers; but a vow was the mere act of thanksgiving, or a testimony of gratitude: and so Jonah joins his vows here with the sacrifice of praise. We hence learn that they were not two different things; but he repeats the same thing twice. Jonah, then, had declared his vow to God for no other purpose but to testify his gratitude.

And hence he adds, *To Jehovah is, or belongs, salvation;* that is, to save is the prerogative of God alone; Jehovah is here in the dative case, for prefixed to it is **ל**, *lamed*. It is then to Jehovah that salvation belongs; the work of saving appertains to no other but to the Supreme God. Since it is so, we see how absurd and insane men are, when they transfer praises to another, as every one does who invents an idol for himself. As, then, there is but the one true God who saves, it behoves us to ascribe to him alone all our praises, that we may not deprive him of his right. This is the import of the whole. It follows —

<320210> JONAH 2:10	
10. And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.	10. Et dixit Jehovah pisci (hoc est, praecepit;) et evomuit Jonam super aridam.

The deliverance of Jonah is here in few words described; but how attentively ought we to consider the event? It was an incredible miracle, that Jonah should have continued alive and safe in the bowels of the fish for three days. For how was it that he was not a thousand times smothered or drowned by waters? We know that fish continually draw in water: Jonah could not certainly respire while in the fish; and the life of man without breathing can hardly continue for a minute. Jonah, then, must have been preserved beyond the power of nature. Then how could it have been that the fish should cast forth Jonah on the shore, except God by his unsearchable power had drawn the fish there? Again, who could have supernaturally opened its bowels and its mouth? His coming forth, then, was in every way miraculous, yea, it was attended with many miracles.

But Jonah, that he might the more extol the infinite power of God, adopted the word said. Hence we learn that nothing is hard to God, for he could by a nod only effect so great a thing as surpasses all our conceptions. If Jonah had said that he was delivered by God's kindness and favor, it would have been much less emphatical, than when he adopts a word which expresses a command, *And Jehovah spake*, or said, *to the fish*.

But as this deliverance of Jonah is an image of the resurrection, this is an extraordinary passage, and worthy of being especially noticed; for the Holy Spirit carries our minds to that power by which the world was formed and is still wonderfully preserved. That we may then, without hesitation and doubt, be convinced of the restoration which God promises to us, let us remember that the world was by him created out of nothing by his word and bidding, and is still thus sustained. But if this general truth is not sufficient, let this history of Jonah come to our minds, — that God commanded a fish to cast forth Jonah: for how was it that Jonah escaped safe and was delivered? Even because it so pleased God, because the Lord commanded; and this word at this day retains the same efficacy. By that power then, by which he works all things, we also shall one day be raised up from the dead. Now follows —

CHAPTER 3.

<320301> JONAH 3:1-2

1. And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,

1. Et factum fuit verbum Jehovahe ad Jonam secundo, dicendo, —

2. Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

2. Surge, proficiscere Nineven in urbem magnam, et praedica ad eam praedicationem quam ego mando tibi.

There is here set before us a remarkable proof of God's grace, — that he was pleased to bestow on Jonah his former dignity and honor. He was indeed unworthy of the common light, but God not only restored him to life, but favored him again with the office and honor of a prophet. This, as I have said, Jonah obtained through the wonderful and singular favor of God. As he had previously fled, and by disobedience deprived himself in a manner of all God's favor, the recovery of his prophetic office was certainly not obtained through his own merit.

It must, in the first place, be observed, that this phrase, *The word of Jehovah came the second time*, ought to be noticed; for the word of God comes to men in different ways. God indeed addresses each of us individually; but he spoke to his Prophets in a special manner; for he designed them to be witnesses and heralds of his will. Hence, whenever God sets a man in some peculiar office, his word is said to come to him: as the word of God is addressed to magistrates because they are commanded to exercise the power committed to them; so also the word of God ever came to the Prophets, because it was not lawful for them to thrust in themselves without being called.

The command now follows, *Arise, go to Nineveh, to that great city, and preach there the preaching which I command thee.* ^{F35} God again repeats what we have observed at the beginning, — that Nineveh was a great city,

that Jonah might provide himself with an invincible courage of mind, and come there well prepared: for it often happens, that many boldly undertake an office, but soon fail, because difficulties had not been sufficiently foreseen by them. Hence, when men find more hardships than they thought of at the beginning, they nearly faint, at least they despond. The Lord, therefore, expressly foretold Jonah how difficult would be his employment; as though he said, “I send thee, a man unknown, and of no rank, and a stranger, to denounce ruin on men, not a few in number, but on a vast multitude, and to carry on a contest with the noblest city, and so populous, that it may seem to be a region of itself.”

We now then understand why this character of the city was added; it was, that Jonah might gird up himself for the contest, that he might not afterwards fail in the middle of his course. This fear indeed frightened him at the beginning, so that he shunned the call of God; but he is not now moved in any degree by the greatness of the city, but resolutely follows where the Lord leads. We hence see, that faith, when once it gains the ascendancy in our hearts, surmounts all obstacles and despises all the greatness of the world; for it is immediately added —

<320303> JONAH 3:3	
<p>3. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.</p>	<p>3. Et surrexit Jonah et profectus est Nineven, secundum mandatum Jehovae: Nineveh autem erat urbs magna Dei (Deo, ad verbum) itinere trium dierum.</p>

Jonah, by saying that he went to Nineveh according to God's command, proves in the first place, as I have said, how great was the power and energy of his faith; for though Jonah had considered the greatness and pride of the city, he seems to have forgotten that he was an obscure man, alone, and unarmed; but he had laid hold on weapons capable of destroying all the power of the world, for he knew that he was sent from above. His conviction was, that God was on his side; and he knew that God had called him. Hence then it was, that with a high and intrepid mind he looked down on all the splendor of the city Nineveh. Hence John does not without reason say, that the victory, by which we overcome the world, proceeds

from faith, (<620504> 1 John 5:4.) Jonah also proves, at the same time, how much he had improved under God's scourges. He had been severely chastised; but we know that most of the unbelieving grow hardened under the rod, and vomit forth their rage against God; Jonah, on the contrary, shows here that chastisement had been useful to him for he was subdued and led to obey God.

He went, then, *according to the command of Jehovah*; that is, nothing else did he regard but to render obedience to God, and to suffer himself to be wholly ruled by him. We hence learn how well God provides for us and for our salvation, when he corrects our perverseness; though sharp may be our chastisements, yet as this benefit follows we know that nothing is better for us than to be humbled under God's hand, as David says in <19B901> Psalm 119:1. This change then, *he went*, is to us a remarkable example; and this is what the Lord has ever in view whenever he roughly handles us; for he cannot otherwise subdue either the haughtiness or the rebellion, or the slowness and indolence of our flesh. We must now also take notice how Jonah attained so much strength; it was, because he had found by experience in the bowels of the fish, that even amidst thousand deaths there is enough in God's protection to secure our safety. As then he had by experience known that the issues of death are at the will and in the hand of God, he is not now touched with fear so as to shun God's command, even were the whole world to rise up against him. Hence the more any one has found the kindness of God, the more courageously he ought to proceed in the discharge of his office, and confidently to commit to God his life and his safety, and resolutely to surmount all the perils of the world.

He then says, *that Nineveh was a great city* ^{F36}, *even a journey of three days*. Some toil much in untying a knot, which at last is no knot at all; for it seems to them strange that one city should be in compass about thirty leagues according to our measure. When they conceive this as being impossible, then they invent some means to avoid the difficulty, — that no one could visit the whole city so as to go through all the alleys, all the streets, and all the public places, except in three days; nay, they add, that this is not to be understood as though one ran or quickly passed through the city, but as though he walked leisurely and made a stay in public places: but these are mere puerilities. And if we believe profane writers, Nineveh must have been a great city, as Jonah declares here: for they say

that its area was about four hundred *stadia*; and we know what space four hundred *stadia* include. A *stadium* is one hundred and twenty-five paces; hence eight *stadia* make a mile. Now if any one will count he will find that there are twelve miles in a hundred *stadia*; there will then be in four hundred *stadia* forty-eight miles. This account well agrees with the testimony of Jonah. And then Diodorus and Herodotus say that there were 1500 towers around the city. Since it was so, it could not certainly be a smaller city than what it is represented here by Jonah. Though these things may seem to exceed what is commonly believed, writers have not yet reported them without some foundation: for however false are found to be many things in Diodorus and Herodotus, yet as to Babylon and Nineveh they could not have dared to say what was untrue; for the first was then standing and known to many; and the ruins of the other were still existing, though it had been for some time destroyed. We shall farther see about the end of the book that this city was large, and so populous, that there were there 120,000 children. If any one receives not this testimony, let him feed on the lies of the devil. But since there were so many children there, what else can we say but that the circumference of the city was very great?

But this seems inconsistent with what immediately follows; for Jonah says, that when he entered the city, he performed a journey in the city for one day and preached. The answer is this, — that as soon as he entered the city, and began to proclaim the command of God, some conversions immediately followed: so Jonah does not mean that he went through the city in one day. He then in the first day converted a part of the city; he afterwards continued to exhort each one to repentance: thus the conversion of the whole city followed; but not in the second or the third day, as it may be easily gathered. Let us now proceed to what remains —

<320304> JONAH 3:4

4. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

4. Et coepit Jonah ingredi in urbem itinere diei unius, et clamavit et dixit, Adhuc quadraginta dies et Nineveh subversa.

Jonah here relates what had briefly been said before, — that he went to Nineveh according to the command of God. He shows then how faithfully he executed the duty enjoined on him, and thus obeyed the word of God. Hence Jonah came and began to enter the city and to preach on the first day. This promptness proves clearly how tractable Jonah had become, and how much he endeavored to obey God in discharging his office: for had there been still a timidity in his heart, he would have inspected the city, as careful and timid men are wont to do, who inquire what is the condition of the place, what are the dispositions of the people, and which is the easiest access to them, and what is the best way, and where is the least danger. If Jonah then had been still entangled by carnal thoughts he would have waited two or three days, and then have begun to exercise his office as a Prophet. This he did not, but entered the city and I cried. We now then see how prompt he was in his obedience, who had before attempted to pass over the sea: he now takes hardly a moment to breathe, but he begins at the very entrance to testify that he had come in obedience to God.

We hence see with what emphasis these words ought to be read. The narrative is indeed very simple; Jonah uses here no rhetorical ornaments, nor does he set forth his entrance with any fine display of words. *Jonah*, he says, *entered into the city*. He who is not well versed in Scripture might say that this is frigid: but when we weigh the circumstances, we see that this simple way of speaking possesses more force and power than all the displays of orators.

He entered then the city *a day's journey, and cried and said*, etc. By saying that he cried, he again proves the courage of his soul; for he did not creep in privately, as men are wont to do, advancing cautiously when dangers are apprehended. He says that he cried: then this freedom shows that Jonah was divested of all fear, and endued with such boldness of spirit, that he raised himself up above all the hindrances of the world. And we ought, in the meantime, to remember how disliked must have been his message: for he did not gently lead the Ninevites to God, but threatened them with destruction, and seemed to have given them no hope of pardon. Jonah might have thought that his voice, as one says, would have to return to his own throat, “Can I denounce ruin on this populous city, without being instantly crushed? Will not the first man that meets me stone me to death?” Thus might Jonah have thought within himself. No fear was, however, able to prevent him from doing his duty as a faithful servant, for

he had been evidently strengthened by the Lord. But it will be better to join the following verse —

<320305> **JONAH 3:5**

5. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

5. Et crediderunt viri Ninevae Deo, et indixerunt jejunium, et induerunt saccos a magno eorum usque ad parvum eorum.

One thing, escaped me in the third verse: Jonah said that Nineveh was a city *great to God*. This form of speech is common in Scripture: for the Hebrews call that Divine, whatever it be, that is superior or excellent: so they say, the cedars of God, the mountains of God, the fields of God, when they are superior in height or in any other respect. Hence a city is called the city of God, when it is beyond others renowned. I wished briefly to allude to this subject, because some, with too much refinement and even puerility says that it was called the city of God, because it was the object of God's care, and in which he intended to exhibit a remarkable instance of conversion. But, as I have said, this is to be taken as the usual mode of speaking in similar cases.

I now return to the text: Jonah says, that the citizens of Nineveh *believed God* ^{F37}. We hence gather that the preaching of Jonah was not so concise but that he introduced his discourse by declaring that he was God's Prophet, and that he did not proclaim these commands without authority; and we also gather that Jonah so denounced ruin, that at the same time he showed God to be the avenger of sins that he reproved the Ninevites, and, as it were, summoned them to God's tribunal, making known to them their guilt; for had he spoken only of punishment, it could not certainly have been otherwise, but that the Ninevites must have rebelled furiously against God; but by showing to them their guilt, he led them to acknowledge that the threatened punishment was just, and thus he prepared them for humility and penitence. Both these things may be collected from this expression of Jonah, that the Ninevites believed God; for were they not persuaded that the command came from heaven, what was their faith? Let us then know, that Jonah had so spoken of his vocation, that the Ninevites felt assured that he was a celestial herald: hence was their faith: and

further, the Ninevites would never have so believed as to put on sackcloth, had they not been reminded of their sins. There is, therefore, no doubt but that Jonah, while crying against Nineveh, at the same time made known how wickedly the men lived, and how grievous were their offenses against God. Hence then it was that they put on sackcloth, and suppliantly fled to God's mercy: they understood that they were deservedly summoned to judgment on account of their wicked lives.

But it may be asked, how came the Ninevites to believe God, as no hope of salvation was given them? for there can be no faith without an acquaintance with the paternal kindness of God; whosoever regards God as angry with him must necessarily despair. Since then Jonah gave them no knowledge of God's mercy, he must have greatly terrified the Ninevites, and not have called them to faith. The answer is, that the expression is to be taken as including a part for the whole; for there is no perfect faith when men, being called to repentance, do suppliantly humble themselves before God; but yet it is a part of faith; for the Apostle says, in Hebrew 11:7, that Noah through faith feared; he deduces the fear which Noah entertained on account of the oracular word he received, from faith, showing thereby that it was faith in part, and pointing out the source from which it proceeded. At the same time, the mind of the holy Patriarch must have been moved by other things besides threatening, when he built an ark for himself, as the means of safety. We may thus, by taking a part for the whole, explain this, place, — that the Ninevites believed God; for as they knew that God required the deserved punishment, they submitted to him, and, at the same time, solicited pardon: but the Ninevites, no doubt, derived from the words of Jonah something more than mere terror: for had they only apprehended this — that they were guilty before God, and were justly summoned to punishment, they would have been confounded and stunned with dread, and could never have been encouraged to seek forgiveness. Inasmuch then as they suppliantly prostrated themselves before God, they must certainly have conceived some hope of grace. They were not, therefore, so touched with penitence and the fear of God, but that they had some knowledge of divine grace: thus they believed God; for though they were aware that they were most worthy of death, they yet despaired not, but retook themselves to prayer. Since then we see that the Ninevites sought this, remedy, we must feel assured that they derived more advantage from the preaching of Jonah than the mere knowledge that

they were guilty before God: this ought certainly to be understood. But we shall speak more on the subject in our next lecture.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as there is so much timidity in us, that none of us is prepared to follow where thou mayest call us, we may be so instructed by the example of thy servant Jonah, as to obey thee in every thing, and that though Satan and the world may oppose us with all their terrors, we may yet be strengthened by a reliance on thy power and protection, which thou hast promised to us, and may go on in the course of our vocation, and never turn aside, but thus contend against all the hindrances of this world, until we reach that celestial kingdom, where we shall enjoy thee and Christ thy only begotten Son, who is our strength and our salvation: and may thy Spirit quicken us, and strengthen all our faculties, that we may obey thee, and that at length thy name may be glorified in us, and that we may finally become partakers of that glory to which thou invites us through Christ our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE SEVENTY-EIGHTH

<320306> JONAH 3:6-8	
<p>6. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.</p>	<p>6. Et pervenit verbum (sermo, vel, res) ad regem Nineveh; et surrexit e solio suo, et abjecit splendidam suam vestem a seipso, et induit saccum, et sedit super pulverem:</p>
<p>7. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:</p>	<p>7. Et promulgavit ac dixit per Nineveh ex consilio regis et magnatum ejus, dicendo, Homo et jumentum (vel, bestia,) bos et ovis, ne gustent quidpiam, ne pascantur, et ne aquas bibant;</p>
<p>8. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.</p>	<p>8. Et induantur saccis homo et bestia, et clament ad Deum in fortitudine; et revertatur quisque a via sua mala, et a rapacitate quae est in manibus eorum.</p>

It is uncertain whether Jonah had preached for some days in the city before it was known to the king. This is indeed the common opinion; for interpreters so expound the verse, which says that word was brought to the king, as though the king himself knew, that the whole city was in commotion through the preaching of Jonah: but the words admit of a different sense, that is that the preaching of Jonah immediately reached the king; and I am disposed to take this view, as Jonah seems here to explain how the Ninevites were led to put on sackcloth. He had before spoken briefly on the subject, but he now explains what took place more fully; and we know that it was commonly the manner of the Hebrews — to relate the chief points in few words, and then to add an explanation. As then Jonah had said in the last verse that the Ninevites had put on sackcloth, and proclaimed a fast, so he now seems to express more distinctly how this happened, that is, through the royal edict. And it is by no means probable

that a fast was proclaimed in the royal city by the mere consent of the people, as the king and his counselors were there present. Inasmuch then as it appears more reasonable that the edict respecting the fast had proceeded from the king, I am therefore inclined so to connect the two verses, as that the first briefly mentions the fruit which followed the preaching of Jonah, and that the second is added as an explanation, for it gives a fuller account of what took place.

Jonah then now says, that a fast was proclaimed by the Ninevites, for the king and his council had so appointed: and I regard the verb **ויגע**, *uigo*, as being in the pluperfect tense, *When word had come to the king:* ^{F38} for Jonah now states the reason why the Ninevites proclaimed a fast; it was because the king had been apprised of the preaching of Jonah, and had called together his counselors. It was then a public edict, and not any movement among the people, capriciously made, as it sometimes happens. He says, that it was an edict published by the authority of the king and his council, or his nobles. At the same time, some take **טעם**, *thom*, as meaning reason or approbation. **טעם**, *thom*, means to taste, and Jonah afterwards uses the verb in this sense; but it is to be taken here in a metaphorical sense for counsel; And I think this meaning is more suitable to this passage. I come now to the subject.

It is worthy of being noticed, that the king of so splendid a city ^{F39}, nay, at that time the greatest monarch, should have rendered himself so submissive to the exhortation of Jonah: for we see how proud kings are; as they think themselves exempt from the common lot of men, so they carry themselves above all laws. Hence it comes, that they will have all things to be lawful for them; and while they give loose reins to their lusts they cannot bear to be admonished, even by their equals. But Jonah was a stranger and of a humble condition: that he therefore so touched the heart of the king, must be ascribed to the hidden power of God, which he puts forth through his word whenever he pleases. God does not indeed work alike by the preaching of his word, he does not always keep to the same course; but, when he pleases, he so efficaciously touches the hearts of men, that the success of his word exceeds all expectation, as in the memorable example presented to us here. Who could have said that a heathen king, who had ever lived according to his own will, who had no feeling as to true and genuine religion, would have been thus in an instant subdued? For he put

aside his royal dress, laid himself in the dust, and clothed himself in sackcloth. We hence see that God not only spoke by the mouth of Jonah, but added power to his word.

We must also bear in mind what Christ says, that the men of Nineveh would rise up in judgment against that generation, as they had repented at the preaching of Jonah; and “Behold,” he said, “a greater than Jonah is here,” (^{<401241>}Matthew 12:41.) Christ, at this day, proclaims the voice of his Gospel; for though he is not here in a visible form among us, he yet speaks by his ministers. If we despise his doctrine, how can our obstinacy and hardness be excused, since the Ninevites, who had no knowledge of the true doctrine of religion, who were imbued with no religious principles, were so suddenly converted by the preaching of Jonah? And that their repentance was sincere we may conclude from this circumstance — that the preaching of Jonah was severe, for he denounced destruction on a most powerful city; this might have instantly inflamed the king’s mind with rage and fury; and that he was calmly humbled, was certainly a proof of no common change. We have then here a remarkable instance of penitence, — that the king should have so forgotten himself and his dignity, as to throw aside his splendid dress, to put on sackcloth, and to lie down on ashes.

But as to fasting and sackcloth, it is very true, as we have observed in our remarks on Joel, that repentance consists not in these external things: for God cares not for outward rites, and all those things which are resplendent in the sight of men are worthless before him; what indeed he requires, is sincerity of heart. Hence what Jonah here says of fasting, and other outward performances, ought to be referred to their legitimate end, — that the Ninevites intended thus to show that they were justly summoned as guilty before God’s tribunal, and also, that they humbly deprecated the wrath of their judge. Fasting then and sackcloth were only an external profession of repentance. Were any one to fast all his life, and to put on sackcloth, and to scatter dust on himself, and not to connect with all this a sincerity of heart, he would do nothing but mock God. ^{F40} Hence these outward performances are, in themselves, of small or of no value, except when preceded by an interior feeling of heart, and men be on this account led to manifest such outward evidences. Whenever then Scripture mentions fasting, and ashes, and sackcloth, we must bear in mind that these things are set before us as the outward signs of repentance which when not genuine do nothing else but provoke the wrath of God; but when true, they

are approved of God on account of the end in view, and not that they avail, of themselves, to pacify his wrath, or to expiate sins.

If now any one asks whether penitence is always to be accompanied with fasting, ashes, and sackcloth, the answer is at hand, — that the faithful ought through their whole life to repent: for except everyone of us continually strives to renounce himself and his former life, he has not yet learned what it is to serve God; for we must ever contend with the flesh. But though there is a continual exercise of repentance, yet fasting is not required of us always. It then follows that fasting is a public and solemn testimony of repentance, when there appears to be some extraordinary evidence of God's wrath. Thus have we seen that the Jews were by Joel called to lie in ashes, and to put on sackcloth because God had come forth, as it were, armed against them; and all the Prophets had declared that destruction was nigh the people. In the same manner the Ninevites, when terrified by this dreadful edict, put on sackcloth proclaimed a fast because this was usually done in extremities. We now then perceive why the king, having himself put on sackcloth, enjoined on the whole people both fasting and other tokens of repentance.

But it seems strange, and even ridiculous, that the king should bid animals, as well as men, to make a confession of repentance; for penitence is a change in man, when he returns to God after having been alienated from him: this cannot comport with the character of brute animals. Then the king of Nineveh acted foolishly and contrary to all reason in connecting animals with men when he spoke of repentance. But, in answer to this, we must bear in mind what I have before said — that destruction had been denounced, not only on men, but also on the whole city, even on the buildings: for as God created the whole world for the sake of men, so also his wrath, when excited against men, includes the beasts, and trees, and every thing in heaven and on earth. But the question is not yet solved; for though God may punish animals on account of men's sins, yet neither oxen nor sheep can pacify the wrath of God. To this I answer — that this was done for the sake of men: for it would have been ridiculous in the king to prohibit food and drink to animals, except he had a regard to men themselves. But his object was to set before the Ninevites, as in a mirror or picture, what they deserved. The same was done under the law; for, whenever they slew victims, they were reminded of their own sins; for it ought to have come to their minds, that the sheep or any other animal

sacrificed was innocent, and that it stood at the altar in his stead who had sinned. They therefore saw in the ox, or the lamb, or the goat, a striking emblem of their own condemnation. So also the Ninevites, when they constrained the oxen, the asses and other animals, to fast, were reminded of what grievous and severe punishment they were worthy: inasmuch as innocent animals suffered punishment together with them. We hence see that no expiation was sought for by the king, when he enjoined a fast on brute animals, but that, on the contrary, men were roused by such means seriously to acknowledge the wrath of God, and to entertain greater fear, that they might be more truly humbled before him, and be displeased with themselves, and be thus more disposed and better prepared and moulded to seek pardon.

We now then see that this must be considered as intended to terrify the consciences of men, that they, who had long flattered themselves, might by such a remedy be roused from their insensibility. The same was the intention of different washings under the law, the cleansing of garments and of vessels; it was, that the people might know that every thing they touched was polluted by their filth. And this ought to be especially observed; for the Papists, wedded as they are to external rites, lay hold on anything said in Scripture about fasting, and ashes, and sackcloth, and think that the whole of religion consists in these outward observances: but bodily exercise, as Paul says, profiteth but littler (^{<540408>} 1 Timothy 4:8.) Therefore this rule ought ever to be our guide — that fasting and such things are in themselves of no value, but must be estimated only by the end in view. So then, when the animals were constrained by the Ninevites to suffer want, the men themselves, being reminded of their guilt, learned what it was to dread God's wrath; and on this account it was that fasting was approved by God.

Now, if any one objects and says that nothing ought to be done in the worship of God beyond what his word warrants, the answer is — that the king of Nineveh had not appointed any kind of expiation, neither did he intend that they should thus worship God, but regarded only the end which I have mentioned; and that end fully harmonizes with the word of God and his command. Hence the king of Nineveh attempted nothing that was inconsistent with the word of God, since he had in every thing this in view — that he and his people might go humbly before God's tribunal, and

with real penitential feelings solicit his forgiveness. This then is an answer sufficiently plain.

When therefore Jonah afterwards subjoins, ^{F41} that the king commanded both the people and the beasts to put on sackcloth, let us know, that if any one now were to take this as an example, he would be nothing else but a mountebank; for this reason ought ever to be remembered, — that the king sought aids by which he might lead himself and his people to true repentance. But the disposition of man is prone to imitate what is evil: for we are all very like apes; we ought therefore always to consider by what spirit those were actuated whom we wish to imitate, lest we should be contented with the outward form and neglect the main things.

Jonah afterwards adds, *And they cried mightily* ^{F42} *to God*. This must be confined to men; for it could not have been applied to brute animals. Men then, as well as the beasts, abstained from meat and drink, and they cried to God. This crying could not have proceeded except from fear and a religious feeling: hence, as I have said, this cannot be applied indiscriminately to the beasts as well as to men. ^{F43} But it deserves to be noticed, that the king of Nineveh commanded the people to cry mightily to God; for we hence learn that they were really frightened, inasmuch as he speaks not here of ordinary crying, but he adds mightily, as when we say, with all our power, or as we say in French, *A force*, or, *fort et ferme*. Jonah then expresses something uncommon and extraordinary, when he tells us that it was contained in the king's edict, that men should cry mightily to God; for it was the same as though he said, "Let all men now awake and shake off their indifference; for every one of us have hitherto greatly indulged ourselves in our vices: it is now time that fear should possess our minds, and also constrain us to deprecate the wrath of God." And it is also worthy of being observed, that the king proposes no other remedy, but that the people should have recourse to prayer. It might indeed have been, that Jonah exhorted the Ninevites to resort to this duty of religion, etc. We may, however, undeniably conclude that it is a feeling implanted in us by nature, that when we are pressed by adversities, we implore the favor of God. This then is the only remedy in afflictions and distresses, to pray to God. But when we, taught by the Law and by the Gospel, use not this remedy, whenever God warns us and exhorts us to repentance, what shadow of excuse can we have, since heathens, even those who understood not a syllable of true religion, yet prayed to God, and the king himself

commanded this with the consent of his nobles? Hence this edict of the king ought to fill us with more shame than if one adduced the same doctrine only from the word of God: for though the authority of that king is not the same with that of God, yet when that miserable and blind prince acknowledged through the dictates of nature, that God is to be pacified by prayer, what excuse, as I have said, can remain for us?

But Jonah shows more clearly afterwards, that it was no feigned repentance when the Ninevites put on sackcloth, and abstained also from meat and drink; for it follows in the king's edict, *And let every one turn from his own wicked ways and from the plunder which is in their hands.* Here the heathen king shows for what purpose and with what design he had given orders respecting fasting and other things; it was done that the Ninevites might thus more effectually stimulate themselves to fear God; for he here exhorts them to turn from their evil way. By "way" the Scripture usually means the whole course or manner of man's life; it was as though he said, "Let every one of you change his disposition and his conduct; let us all become new creatures." And this is true penitence, the conversion of man to God; and this the heathen king meant. The more shameful then is their dullness who seek to pacify God by frivolous devices, as the Papists do; for while they obtrude on God trifles, I know not what, they think that these are so many expiations, and they tenaciously contend for them. They need no other judge than this heathen king, who shows that true penitence is wholly different, that it then only takes place when men become changed in mind and heart, and wholly turn to a better course of life.

Let every one then turn, he says, from his evil way, and from the plunder^{F44} *which is in their hand.* One kind of evil is here subjoined, a part being stated for the whole, for plunders were not the only things which stood in need of amendment among the Ninevites, as it is probable that they were polluted by other vices and corruptions. In a city so large, drunkenness probably prevailed, as well as luxury, and pride, and ambition, and also lusts. It cannot indeed be doubted, but that Nineveh was filled with innumerable vices: but the king, by mentioning a part for the whole, points out here the principal vice, when he says, *Let every one turn from his evil way, and from his rapacity.* It was the same as though he had said that the principal virtue is equity or justice, that is, when men deal with one another without doing any hurt or injury: and well would it be were this

doctrine to prevail at this day among all those who falsely assume the Christian name. For the Papists, though they accumulate expiations, pass by charity; and in the whole course of life equity has hardly any place. Let them then learn, from the mouth of a heathen king, what God principally requires from men, and approves of in their life, even to abstain from plunder and from the doing of any injury. We now then perceive why rapacity was especially mentioned. But we must bear in mind that the king, as yet a novice, and hardly in a slight degree imbued with the elements of religion, through hearing what Jonah preached, gave orders to his people according to the measure of his faith and knowledge: but if he made such progress in so short a time, what excuse can we pretend, whose ears have been stunned by continual preaching for twenty or thirty years, if we yet come short of the novitiate of this king? These circumstances ought then to be carefully observed by us. Let us now proceed —

<320309> JONAH 3:9

9. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

9. Quis novit an convertatur et poenitentia ducatur Deus, et revertatur a furore irae suae, ut non pereamus?

The mind and design of the king are here more distinctly stated, — that he thus endeavored to reconcile himself and the people to God. Some give a rendering somewhat different, “He who knows will turn and be led by penitence,” etc.; they read not interrogatively; but this rendering cannot stand. There is in the meaning of the Prophet nothing ambiguous, for he introduces the king here as expressing a doubt, *Who knows whether God will be reconciled to us?* We hence see that the king was not overwhelmed with despair for he still thought of a remedy; and this is the purport of the verse.

But this may seem contrary to the nature of faith; and then if it be opposed to faith, it follows that it must be inconsistent with repentance; for faith and repentance are connected together, as we have observed in other places; as no one can willingly submit to God, except he has previously known his goodness, and entertained a hope of salvation; for he who is touched only with fear avoids God’s presence; and then despair

prevails, and perverseness follows. How then was it that the king of Nineveh had seriously and undissemblingly repented, while yet he spoke doubtfully of the favor of God? To this I answer, that it was a measure of doubt, which was yet connected with faith, even that which does not directly reject the promise of God, but has other hindrances: as for instance, when any ones cast down with fear, afterwards receives courage from the hope of pardon and salvation set before him, he is not yet immediately freed from all fear; for as long as he looks on his sins, and is entangled by various thoughts, he vacillates, he fluctuates. There is, therefore, no doubt but that the king of Nineveh entertained hope of deliverance; but at the same time his mind was perplexed, both on account of the sermon of Jonah and on account of the consciousness of his own sins: there were then two obstacles, which deprived the king's mind of certainty, or at least prevented him from apprehending immediately the mercy of God, and from perceiving with a calm mind that God would be gracious to him. The first obstacle was the awful message, — that Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days. For though Jonah, as we have said, might have added something more, yet the denunciation was distinct and express, and tended to cast down the minds of all. The king then had to struggle, in order to overcome this obstacle, and to resist this declaration of Jonah as far as it was found to be without any comfort. And then the king, while considering his own sins, could not but vacillate for some time. But yet we see that he strove to emerge, though he had these obstacles before his eyes, for he says, *Who knows whether God will turn from the fury of his wrath, and repent?* We hence see that the king was in a hard struggle; for though Jonah seemed to have closed the door and to shut out the king from any hope of deliverance, and though his own conscience held him fast bound, he yet perseveres and encourages himself; in short, he aspires to the hope of pardon.

And it must be further noticed, that this form of expression expresses a difficulty rather than a mistrust. The king then here asks, as it were doubtfully, *Who knows whether God will turn?* for it was a difficult thing to be believed, that God, after a long forbearance, would spare the wicked city. Hence the king expresses it as a difficulty; and such an interrogation was no proof of the absence of faith. A similar expression is found in Joel, “Who knows,” etc.? We then stated several things in explaining that passage: but it is enough here briefly to state, that the king here does not

betray a mistrust, but sets forth a difficulty. And it was an evidence of humility that he acknowledged himself and his people to be sunk as it were, in the lowest hell, and yet ceased not to entertain some hope: for it is a strong proof of hope, when we still entertain it, though this be contrary to the whole order of nature, and wholly inconsistent with human reason. We now then see the meaning of the words. Of the repentance of God we shall speak hereafter, either to-morrow or the day after.

Lest we perish, he says. We see how a heathen king thought of redeeming himself from destruction' it was by having God pacified. As soon then as any danger threatens us, let us bear this in mind, that no deliverance can be found except the Lord receives us into favor; such was the conviction of the king of Nineveh, for he concluded that all things would be well as soon as God should be propitious. We hence see how much this new and untrained disciple had improved; for he understood that men cannot escape miseries until God be pacified towards them, and that when men return into favor with him, though they ought to have perished a hundred times before, they yet shall be delivered and made safe; for the grace or the favor of God is the fountain of life and salvation, and of all blessings. It afterwards follows —

<320310> **JONAH 3:10**

10. And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

10. Et vidit Deus opera eorum, quod conversi essent a via sua mala; et poenituit Deum super malo, quod pronuntiaverat se facturum illis, et non fecit.

Jonah now says, that the Ninevites obtained pardon through their repentance: and this is an example worthy of being observed; for we hence learn for what purpose God daily urges us to repentance, and that is, because he desires to be reconciled to us, and that we should be reconciled to him. The reason then why so many reproofs and threatening resound in our ears, whenever we come to hear the word of God, is this, — that as God seeks to recover us from destruction he speaks sharply to us: in short, whatever the Scripture contains on repentance and the judgment of God ought to be wholly applied for this purpose — to induce us to return

into favor with him; for he is ready to be reconciled, and is ever prepared to embrace those who without dissimulation turn to him. We then understand by this example that God has no other object in view, whenever he sharply constrains us, than that he may be reconciled to us, provided only we be our own judges, and thus anticipate his wrath by genuine sorrow of heart, provided we solicit the pardon of our guilt and sin, and loathe ourselves, and confess that we are worthy of perdition.

But Jonah seems to ascribe their deliverance to their repentance, and also to their works: for he says that the Ninevites obtained pardon, because God looked on their works.

We must first see what works he means, that no one may snatch at a single word, as hypocrites are wont to do; and this, as we have said, is very commonly the case under the Papacy. *God had respect to their works* — what works? not sackcloth, not ashes, not fasting; for Jonah does not now mention these; but he had respect to their works — because they turned from their evil way. We hence see that God was not pacified by outward rites only, by the external profession of repentance, but that he rather looked on the true and important change which had taken place in the Ninevites, for they had become renewed. These then were their works, even the fruits of repentance. And such a change of life could not have taken place, had not the Ninevites been really moved by a sense of God's wrath. The fear of God then had preceded; and this fear could not have been without faith. We hence see that he chiefly speaks here not of external works, but of the renovation of men.

But if any one objects and says that still this view does not prevent us from thinking that good works reconcile us to God, and that they thus procure our salvation: to this I answer — that the question here is not about the procuring cause of forgiveness. It is certain that God was freely pacified towards the Ninevites, as he freely restores his favor daily to us. Jonah then did not mean that satisfactions availed before God, as though the Ninevites made compensations for their former sins. The words mean no such thing; but he shows it as a fact which followed, that God was pacified, because the Ninevites repented. But we are to learn from other parts of Scripture how God becomes gracious to us, and how we obtain pardon with him, and whether this comes to us for our merits and repentance or whether God himself forgives us freely. Since the whole

Scripture testifies that pardon is gratuitously given us, and that God cannot be otherwise propitious to us than by not imputing sins, there is no need, with regard to the present passage, anxiously to inquire why God looked on the works of the Ninevites, so as not to destroy them: for this is said merely as a consequence. Jonah then does not here point out the cause, but only declares that God was pacified towards the Ninevites, as soon as they repented. But we shall speak more on this subject.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are loaded with so many vices, and so many sins, yea, and scandalous crimes break out daily among us, — O grant, that we may not be hardened against so many exhortations, by which thou invites us to thyself, but that being made contrite in spirit, whenever thou denounces on us thy wrath, we may be really humbled, and so place ourselves before thy tribunal, that we may, by a true confession and genuine fear, anticipate the judgment which would otherwise have been prepared for us; and that in the meantime relying on Christ our Mediator, we may entertain such a hope of pardon as may raise us up to thee, and not doubt but that thou art ready to embrace us, when we shall be moved by a true and real feeling of fear and penitence, since it is a proof of thy favor, when thou art pleased to anticipate us, and by thy Spirit testifies that thou art a Father to us; and, in a word, may we be so cast down in ourselves, as to raise up our hope even to heaven, through Jesus Christ one Lord. Amen.

LECTURE SEVENTY-NINTH

We stated yesterday how God remitted to the Ninevites the punishment which he had threatened by the mouth of Jonah, and that the remission both of the punishment and of the guilt was gratuitous. For whenever God sets forth pardon to sinners, the condition of repentance is at the same time added: it does not yet follow that repentance is the procuring cause of obtaining pardon; for God offers it freely, nor is he otherwise induced than by his own mere bounty. But as he would not have men to abuse his indulgence and forbearance, he lays down this condition, — that they must repent of their former life and change for the better. So then he regards the works of those who testify that they hate sin, and who, with a sincere and real desire, flee to His mercy; and no man from the heart desires God to be propitious to him, but he who loathes himself on account of his sin. This is the reason why Isaiah also says, that God would be merciful to the remnants of his people, even because every one would turn away from his iniquity. God does not certainly mean by these words that repentance, as already stated, is the cause of our salvation; but he requires a change for the better, for no one will really seek grace, except he loathes himself on account of his sins.

Now as to what Jonah adds, *that God was led to repent*, it is a mode of speaking that ought to be sufficiently known to us. Strictly speaking, no repentance can belong to God: and it ought not to be ascribed to his secret and hidden counsel. God then is in himself ever the same, and consistent with himself; but he is said to repent, when a regard is had to the comprehension of men: for as we conceive God to be angry, whenever he summons us to his tribunal, and shows to us our sins; so also we conceive him to be placable, when he offers the hope of pardon. But it is according to our perceptions that there is any change, when God forgets his wrath, as though he had put on a new character. As then we cannot otherwise be terrified, that we may be humbled before God and repent, except he sets forth before us his wrath, the Scripture accommodates itself to the grossness of our understanding. But, on the other hand, we cannot confidently call on God, unless we feel assured that he is placable. We hence see that some kind of change appears to us, whenever God either threatens or gives hope of pardon and reconciliation: and to this must be

referred this mode of speaking which Jonah adopts, when he says that God repented.

We hence see that there is a twofold view of God, — as he sets himself forth in his word, — and as he is as to his hidden counsel. With regard to his secret counsel, I have already said that God is always like himself, and is subject to none of our feelings: but with regard to the teaching of his word, it is accommodated to our capacities. God is now angry with us, and then, as though he were pacified, he offers pardon, and is propitious to us. Such is the repentance of God.

Let us then remember that it proceeds from his word, that God is said to repent; for the Ninevites could form no other opinion but that it was God's decree that they were to be destroyed, — how so? because he had so testified by his word. But when they rose up to an assurance of deliverance, they then found that a change had taken place, that is, according to the knowledge of their own faith: and the feelings both of fear and of joy proceeded from the word: for when God denounced his wrath, it was necessary for the wretched men to be terrified; but when he invited them to a state of safety by proposing reconciliation to them, he then put on a new character; and thus they ascribed a new feeling to God. This is the meaning. Let us now proceed —

CHAPTER 4.

<320401> JONAH 4:1

1. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

1. Et displicuit Jonae dolore magno, et succensuit apud se. ^{F45}

Jerome commends this grief of Jonah, and compares it to the holy zeal of Paul when he wished himself to be an anathema for his brethren, (<450903> Romans 9:3:) for he denies that he grieved because God had showed mercy to so illustrious a city; but because the conversion of the Gentiles was a certain presage of the destruction of the chosen people. As then Jonah perceived as in a mirror the near ruin of Israel, he on this account grieved, if we believe Jerome: but this notion is extremely frivolous; for, immediately after, God reprov'd Jonah. What then will the foolish and puerile apology of Jerome avail the Prophet, since God has declared that he acted perversely in grieving? Nay, the dullness of Jerome is thus become evident; (thus indeed do I speak of a man, who, though learned and laborious, has yet deprived himself of that praise, which otherwise he might have justly earned.) His wayward disposition everywhere betrayed itself; and he is evidently disprov'd in this very context, where Jonah shows clearly that the cause of his grief was another, even this, — that he was unwilling to be deemed a false or a lying prophet: hence was his great grief and his bitterness. And this we see, had God not expressed his mind, was unjust and inconsistent with every reason.

We may then conclude that Jonah was influenced by false zeal when he could not with resignation bear that the city of Nineveh should have been delivered from destruction: and he also himself amplifies the greatness of his sin. He might have said, in one word, that it displeased Jonah; but not satisfied with this simple form, he adds, that he felt great displeasure or grief; and he afterwards adds, that he was very angry. Though the beginning may not have been wrong, yet excess was sinful. But he confesses that there was excess, and want of moderation in his grief: since then he accuses himself in plain words what good is it, by false and invented pretences, to cover what we clearly see cannot be excused? But

that it may be more evident why the deliverance of the city of Nineveh displeased Jonah, let us go on with the context —

<320402> **JONAH 4:2**

2. And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

2. Et oravit ad Jehovam et dixit, Obsecro Jehova, an non hic sermo meus, quum adhuc essem in terra mea? Propterea festinavi fugere in Tharsis, quia noveram quod tu sis Deus propitius (vel, plenus gratiae,) et misericors, tardus ad iram, multus clementia, et qui poenitentia duceris super malo.

It seems by no means befitting that Jonah should have said here that he prayed; for prayer ought to be calm; but he confesses that his mind was in a state of excitement. As then anger was burning within the Prophet, how could he come before God and utter a suitable prayer? And further, what is the end of praying, but to confess that whatever good is to be obtained resides in God, and is to be sought humbly from him? But Jonah here, on the contrary, expostulates and clamors against God; for he seems in a manner to be contending that he had a just reason for his flight, and also that God ought not to have pardoned the Ninevites. He then accuses God, that he might free himself from every blame. But all this is foreign and remote from what is required in prayer. How then must we understand this passage, in which he says that he prayed? My answer is — that the faithful often in a disturbed state of mind approach God with a desire to pray, and that their prayers are not wholly rejected, though they are not altogether approved and accepted. And hence also it appears more evident how the works of the godly are regarded by God, though they are sprinkled with many stains. Whenever the Papists read that any work has pleased God, they imagine that all was perfection and cleanness: but there is no work which is not infected with some pollution, unless it be purified by a free pardon. This I say is evident to us in this prayer, which was not so rejected by God, as though it retained not the character of prayer: and yet it is certain that Jonah was by no means rightly influenced when he

prayed so clamorously, finding fault, as it were, with God, and retaining still some portion of his own obstinacy; for he boasted of his flight. But this flight, as we have stated, was a proof of manifest rebellion, since, by shaking off the yoke, he despised the call of God.

We must therefore acknowledge that there was some piety in this prayer of Jonah, as well as many faults. It was an act of piety that he addressed his complaints to God. For though hypocrites may pray to God, they yet are wholly averse to him, and freely give vent to their bitterness against God: but Jonah, while he here complains, and observes no moderation, but is carried away by a blind and perverse impulse, is yet prepared to submit to God, as we shall hereafter see. This is the reason why he says that he prayed: for he would not have been ashamed to confess any grievous sin of which he might have been conscious. He did not then extenuate his fault by using the word prayer as hypocrites are wont to do, who ever set up some pretenses or veils when they seek to cover their own baseness: such was not the object of Jonah. When therefore he says that he prayed, he declares generally that he did not so speak against God, but that he still retained some seed of piety and obedience in his heart. *Jonah* then *prayed*. Hence it follows, as I have before stated, that many of the prayers of the saints are sinful, (*vitiosas* — faulty) which, when tried by the right rule, deserve to be rejected. But the Lord, according to his own mercy, pardons their defects so that these confused and turbulent prayers yet retain their title and honor.

Now he says, *I pray thee, Jehovah is not this what I said?* Here Jonah openly declares why he bore so ill the deliverance of Nineveh from destruction, because he was thus found to have been false and lying. But it may seem strange that the Prophet had more regard for his own reputation than for the glory of God; for in this especially shines forth the glory of God, that he is reconcilable as soon as men return to the right way, and that he offers himself to them as a father. Ought then Jonah to have preferred his own honor to the glory of God? I answer, — that the Prophet was not so devoted to himself, but that a concern for the glory of God held the first place in his soul; this is certain. For he connected, and justly so, his own ministry with the glory of God; as it proceeded from his authority. When Jonah entered Nineveh, he cried not as a private man, but avowed that he was sent by God. Now if the preaching of Jonah is found to be false, reproach will recoil on the author of his call, even on God.

Jonah then no doubt could not bear that the name of God should be exposed to the reproaches of the Gentiles, as though he had spoken dissemblingly, now opening hell, then heaven: and there is nothing so contrary to the glory of God as such a dissimulation. We hence see why Jonah was seized with so much grief; he did not regard himself; but as he saw that an occasion would be given to ungodly blasphemers, if God changed his purpose, or if he did not appear consistent with his word, he felt much grieved.

But however specious this reason may be, we yet learn of how much avail are good intentions with God. Whatever good intention can be imagined, it was certainly a good intention in Jonah, worthy of some praise, that he preferred dying a hundred times rather than to hear these reproachful blasphemies — that the word of God was a mere sport, that his threatening were no better than fables, that God made this and that pretense, and transformed himself into various characters. This was certainly the very best intention, if it be estimated by our judgment. But we shall presently see that it was condemned by the mouth of God himself. Let us hence learn not to arrogate to ourselves judgment in matters which exceed our capacities, but to subject our minds to God, and to seek of him the spirit of wisdom. For whence was it that Jonah so fretted against God, except that he burned with a desire for his glory? But his zeal was inconsiderate, for he would be himself the judge and arbitrator, while, on the contrary, he ought to have subjected himself altogether to God. And the same rule ought to be observed also by us. When we see many things happening through a Divine interposition, that is, through the secret providence of God, and things which expose his name to the blasphemies of the ungodly, we ought indeed to feel grief; but in the meantime let us ask of the Lord to turn at length these shameful reproaches to his own glory; and let us by no means raise an uproar, as many do, who immediately begin to contend with God, when things are otherwise ordered than what they wish or think to be useful. Let us learn by the example of Jonah not to measure God's judgments by our own wisdom, but to wait until he turns darkness into light. And at the same time let us learn to obey his commands, to follow his call without any disputing: though heaven and earth oppose us, though many things occur which may tend to avert us from the right course, let us yet continue in this resolution, — that nothing

is better for us than to obey God, and to go on in the way which he points out to us.

But by saying that he *hastened to go to Tarshish*, he does not altogether excuse his flight; but he now more clearly explains, that he did not shun trouble or labor, that he did not run away from a contest or danger, but that he only avoided his call, because he felt a concern for the glory of God. The import, then, of Jonah's words is, — that he makes God here, as it were, his witness and judge, that he did not withdraw himself from obedience to God through fear of danger, or through idleness, or through a rebellious spirit, or through any other evil motive, but only because he was unwilling that his holy name should be profaned, and would not of his own accord be the minister of that preaching, which would be the occasion of opening the mouth of ungodly and profane men, and of making them to laugh at God himself. Since then I cannot hope, he says, for any other issue to my preaching than to make the Gentiles to deride God, yea, and to revile his holy name, as though he were false and deceitful, I chose rather to flee to Tarshish. Then Jonah does not here altogether clear himself; for otherwise that chastisement, by which he ought to have been thoroughly subdued, must have failed in its effect. He had been lately restored from the deep, and shall we say that he now so extols himself against God, that he wishes to appear wholly free from every blame? This certainly would be very strange: but, as I have said, he declares to God, that he fled at the beginning for no other reason, but because he did not expect any good fruit from his preaching, but, on the contrary, feared what now seemed to take place, — that God's name would be ridiculed.

For he immediately adds, *For I know that thou art a God full of grace, and merciful, slow to wrath*, etc. It is a wonder that Jonah withdrew from his lawful call; for he knew that God was merciful, and there is no stronger stimulant than this to stir us on, when God is pleased to use our labor: and we know that no one can with alacrity render service to God except he be allured by his paternal kindness. Hence no one will be a willing Prophet or Teacher, except he is persuaded that God is merciful. Jonah then seems here to reason very absurdly when he says, that he withdrew himself from his office, because he knew that God was merciful. But how did he know this? By the law of God; for the passage is taken from ^{<023301>}Exodus 33:1, where is described that remarkable and memorable vision, in which God offered to Moses a view of himself: and there was then exhibited to the

holy Prophet, as it were, a living representation of God, and there is no passage in the law which expresses God's nature more to the life; for God was then pleased to make himself known in a familiar way to his servant.

As then Jonah had been instructed in the doctrine of the law, how could he discharge the office of a Prophet among his own people? And why did not this knowledge discourage his mind, when he was called to the office of a Teacher? It is then certain that this ought to be confined to the sort of preaching, such as we have before explained. Jonah would not have shrunk from God's command, had he been sent to the Ninevites to teach what he had been ordered to do among the chosen people. Had then a message been committed to Jonah, to set forth a gracious and merciful God to the Ninevites, he would not have hesitated a moment to offer his service. But as this express threatening, *Nineveh shall be destroyed*, was given him in charge, he became confounded, and sought at length to flee away rather than to execute such a command. Why so? Because he thus reasoned with himself, "I am to denounce a near ruin on the Ninevites; why does God command me to do this, except to invite these wretched men to repentance? Now if they repent, will not God be instantly ready to forgive them? He would otherwise deny his own nature: God cannot be unlike himself, he cannot put off that disposition of which he has once testified to Moses. Since God, then, is reconcilable, if the Ninevites will return to the right way and flee to him, he will instantly embrace them: thus I shall be found to be false in my preaching."

We now then perceive how this passage of Jonah is to be understood, when he says that he fled beyond the sea, at least that he attempted to do so, because he knew that God was gracious; for he would not have deprived God of his service, had not this contrariety disturbed and discouraged his mind, "What! I shall go there as God's ambassador, in a short time I shall be discovered to be a liar: will not this reproach be cast on the name of God himself? It is therefore better for me to be silent, than that God, the founder of my call, should be ridiculed." We see that Jonah had a distinct regard to that sort of preaching which we have already referred to. And it hence appears that Jonah gave to the Ninevites more than he thought; for he supposed that he was sent by God, only that the Ninevites might know that they were to be destroyed: but he brought deliverance to them; and this indeed he partly suspected or knew before; for he retained this truth — that God cannot divest himself of his mercy,

for he remains ever the same. But when he went forth to execute the duty enjoined on him he certainly had nothing to expect but the entire ruin of the city Nineveh. God in the meantime employed his ministry for a better end and purpose. There is indeed no doubt but that he exhorted the Ninevites to repentance; but his own heart was as it were closed up, so that he could not allow them the mercy of God. We hence see that Jonah was seized with perplexities, so that he could not offer deliverance to the Ninevites, and it was yet offered them by God through his instrumentality.

We now then understand how God often works by his servants; for he leads them as the blind by his own hand where they think not. Thus, when he stirs up any one of us, we are sometimes **ὀλιγόπιστοι** — very weak in faith; we think that our labor will be useless and without any fruit, or at least attended with small success. But the Lord will let us see what we could not have expected. Such was the case with Jonah; for when he came to Nineveh, he had no other object but to testify respecting the destruction of the city; but the Lord was pleased to make him the minister of salvation. God then honored with remarkable success the teaching of Jonah, while he was unworthy of so great an honor; for, as we have already said, he closed up in a manner every access to the blessing of God. We now then apprehend the meaning of this passage, in which Jonah says that he fled from the call of God, because he knew that God was ready to be gracious and merciful.

I come now to the great things which are said of God. **חֲנּוּן**, *chenun*, properly means a disposition to show favor, as though it was said that God is gratuitously benevolent; we express the same in our language by the terms, *benin, gratieux, debonnaire*. God then assumes to himself this character; and then he says, *merciful*; and he adds this that we may know that he is always ready to receive us, if indeed we come to him as to the fountain of goodness and mercy. But the words which follow express more clearly his mercy, and show how God is merciful, — even because he is abundant in compassion and slow to wrath. God then is inclined to kindness; and though men on whom he looks are unworthy, he is yet merciful; and this he expresses by the word **רַחֻם**, *rechum*.

It is at the same time necessary to add these two sentences that he is *abundant* in compassion and slow to wrath, — why so? For we ever seek

in ourselves some cause for God's favor; when we desire God to be kind to us, we inquire in ourselves why he ought to favor us: and when we find nothing, all the faith we before had respecting God's grace at once vanishes. The Lord therefore does here recall us to himself, and testifies that he is kind and merciful, inasmuch as he is abundant in compassion; as though he said, "I have in myself a sufficient reason, why I should be accessible to you, and why I should receive you and show you favor." Hence the goodness of God alone ought to be regarded by us, when we desire his mercy, and when we have need of pardon. It is as though he had said, that he is not influenced by any regard for our worthiness, and that it is not for merits that he is disposed to mercy when we have sinned, and that he receives us into favor; but that he does all this because his goodness is infinite and inexhaustible. And it is also added, that he is *slow to wrath*. This slowness to wrath proves that God provides for the salvation of mankind, even when he is provoked by their sins. Though miserable men provoke God daily against themselves, he yet continues to have a regard for their salvation. He is therefore slow to wrath, which means, that the Lord does not immediately execute such punishment as they deserve who thus provoke him. We now then see what is the import of these words.

Let us now return to this — that Jonah thrust himself from his office, because he knew that God was slow to wrath, and merciful, and full of grace: he even had recourse to this reasoning, "Either God will change his nature, or spare the Ninevites if they repent: and it may be that they will repent; and then my preaching will be found to be false; for God will not deny himself, but will afford an example of his goodness and mercy in forgiving this people." We may again remark, that we act perversely, when we follow without discrimination our own zeal: it is indeed a blind fervor which then hurries us on. Though then a thousand inconsistencies meet us when God commands any thing, our eyes ought to be closed to them, and we ought ever to follow the course of our calling; for he will so regulate all events, that all things shall redound to his glory. It is not for us in such a case to be over-wise; but the best way is, to leave in God's hand the issue of things. It becomes us indeed to fear and to feel concerned; but our anxiety ought, at the same time, to be in submission to God, so that it is enough for us to pray. This is the import of the whole.

Now as to what he says that God *repents of the evil*, we have already explained this: it means, that though God has already raised his hand, he

will yet withdraw it, as soon as he sees any repentance in men; for evil here is to be taken for punishment. The Lord then, though he might justly inflict extreme punishment on men, yet suspends his judgment, and when they come to him in true penitence he is instantly pacified. This is God's repentance; he is said to repent when he freely forgives whatever punishment or evil men have deserved whenever they loathe themselves.

^{F46} It now follows —

<320403> **JONAH 4:3**

3. Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

3. Et tu Jehova, tolle, quaeso, animam meam a me; quia melius mori meum quam vivere.

We here see how angry Jonah was in his zeal: for this prayer cannot certainly be ascribed to his faith, as some think, who say that Jonah took a flight as it were in his soul to heaven, when he made this prayer, as though he dreaded not death, but having been divested of all fear, being free and disengaged, he presented himself to God. I do not think that the mind of Jonah was so heroic. There is indeed no doubt, as I have already said, but that he still retained some seed of piety; and this, I said, is sufficiently proved by the word prayer; for if Jonah had burst out in the strain of one in despair, it would not have been a prayer. Since then he prayed by thus speaking, it follows that it was not the cry of despair, but of too much displeasure, which Jonah did not restrain. In short, this prayer proceeded from a pious and holy zeal; but Jonah sinned as to its measure or excess; for he had in a manner forgotten himself, when *he preferred death to life*.

Thou Jehovah, he says, *take me away*. He was first not free from blame in hastily wishing to die; for it is not in our power to quit this world; but we ought with submissive minds to continue in it as long as God keeps us in the station in which we are placed. whosoever, then, hastens to death with so great an ardor no doubt offends God. Paul knew that death was desirable in his case, (<⁵⁰⁰¹²²> Philippians 1:22;) but when he understood that his labor would be useful to the Church, he was contented with his lot, and preferred the will of God to his own will; and thus he was prepared both to live and to die, as it seemed good to God. It was otherwise with Jonah, "Now," he says, "take away my life." This was one

fault; but the other was, — that he wished to die, because God spared the Ninevites. Though he was touched with some grief, he ought not yet to have gone so far as this, or rather to rush on, so as to desire death on account of the weariness of his life.

But we hence learn to what extremes men are carried, when once they give loose reins to inconsiderate zeal. The holy Prophet Jonah, who had been lately tamed and subdued by so heavy a chastisement is now seized and carried away by a desire to die, — and why? because he thought that it was hard that he denounced destruction on the Ninevites, and that still their city remained safe. This example ought to check us, that we express not too boldly our opinion respecting the doings of God, but, on the contrary, hold our thoughts captive, lest any presumption of this kind be manifested by us; for there is none of us who does not condemn Jonah, as also he condemned himself; for he does not here narrate his own praise, but means to show how foolishly he had judged of God's work. Jonah then confesses his own folly; and therefore his experience is to us an evidence that there is nothing more preposterous than for us to settle this or that according to our own wisdom, since this is alone true wisdom, to submit ourselves wholly to the will of God.

Now if any one raises a question here, — whether it is lawful to desire death; the answer may be briefly this, — that death is not to be desired on account of the weariness of life; this is one thing: and by the weariness of life I understand that state of mind, when either poverty, or want, or disgrace, or any such thing, renders life hateful to us: but if any, through weariness on account of his sins and hatred to them, regrets his delay on earth, and can adopt the language of Paul,

“Miserable am I, who will free me from the body of this death!”

(^{<450724>} Romans 7:24,)

— he entertains a holy and pious wish, provided the submission, to which I have referred, be added so that this feeling may not break forth in opposition to the will of God; but that he who has such a desire may still suffer himself to be detained by his hand as long as he pleases. And further, when any one wishes to die, because he fears for himself as to the future, or dreads to undergo any evil, he also struggles against God; and such was the fault of Jonah; for he says that death was better to him than

life, — and why? because the Lord had spared the Ninevites. We hence see how he was blinded, yea, carried away by a mad impulse to desire death.

Let us then learn so to love this life as to be prepared to lay it down whenever the Lord pleases: let us also learn to desire death, but so as to live to the Lord, and to proceed in the race set before us until he himself lead us to its end. Now follows the reproof of God —

<320404> **JONAH 4:4**

4. Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?

4. Et dixit Jehova, An bene facis excandescendo apud te? ^{F47}

There is no doubt but that God by thus reproofing Jonah condemns his intemperate warmth. But since God alone is a fit judge of man's conduct, there is no reason for us to boast that we are influenced by good intentions; for there is nothing more fallacious than our own balances. When therefore we weigh facts, deeds, and thoughts by our own judgment, we deceive ourselves. Were any disposed rhetorically to defend the conduct of Jonah, he might certainly muster up many specious pretenses; and were any one inclined to adduce excuses for Jonah, he might be made to appear to us altogether innocent: but though the whole world absolved him, what would it avail, since he was condemned by the mouth of God himself, who alone, as I have already stated, is the judge? We ought then to feel assured, that Jonah had done foolishly, even if no reason was apparent to us; for the authority of the Supreme Judge ought to be more than sufficient.

Now God expressly condemns his wrath. Had Jonah modestly expostulated, and unburdened his griefs into the bosom of God, it would have been excusable; though his ardor would not have been free from blame, it might yet have been borne with. But now, when he is angry, it is past endurance; for wrath, as one says, is but short madness; and then it blinds the perceptions of men, it disturbs all the faculties of the soul. God then does not here in a slight manner condemn Jonah, but he shows how grievously he had fallen by allowing himself to become thus angry. We must at the same time remember, that Jonah had sinned not only by giving way to anger; he might have sinned, as we have said, without being angry. But God by this circumstance — that he thus became turbulent, enhances

his sin. And it is certainly a most unseemly thing, when a mean creature rises up against God, and in a boisterous spirit contends with him: this is monstrous; and Jonah was in this state of mind.

We hence see why an express mention is made of his anger, — God thus intended to bring conviction home to Jonah, that he might no more seek evasions. Had he simply said, “Why! how is it that thou dost not leave to me the supreme right of judging? If such is my will, why dost not thou submissively acknowledge that what I do is rightly done? Is it thy privilege to be so wise, as to dictate laws to me, or to correct my decisions?” — had the Lord thus spoken, there might have remained still some excuse; Jonah might have said, “Lord, I cannot restrain my grief, when I see thy name so profaned by unseemly reproaches; can I witness this with a calm mind?” He might thus have still sought some coverings for his grief; but when the Lord brought forward his anger, he must have been necessarily silenced; for what could be found to excuse Jonah, when he thus perversely rebelled, as I have said, against God, his Judge and Maker? We now then understand why God expressly declares that Jonah did not do well in being thus angry.

But I wonder how it came into Jerome’s mind to say that Jonah is not here reproved by the Lord, but that something of an indifferent kind is mentioned. He was indeed a person who was by nature a sophister, (cavillator — a caviler;) and thus he wantonly trifled with the work of falsifying Scripture; he made no conscience of perverting passages of holy writ. As, for instance, when he writes about marriage, he says that they do not ill who marry, and yet that they do not well. What a sophistry is this, and how vapid! So also on this place, “God,” he says, “does not condemn Jonah, neither did he intend to reprove his sin; but, on the contrary, Jonah brings before us here the person of Christ, who sought death that the whole world might be saved; for when alive he could not do good to his own nation, he could not save his own kindred; he therefore preferred to devote himself and his life for the redemption of the world.” These are mere puerilities; and thus the whole meaning of this passage, as we clearly see, is distorted. But the question is more emphatical than if God had simply said, “Thou hast sinned by being thus angry;” for an affirmative sentence has not so much force as that which is in the form of a question.

God then not only declares as a Judge that Jonah had not done well, but he also draws from him his own confession, as though he said, “Though thou art a judge in thine own cause, thou can’t not yet make a cover for thy passion, for thou art beyond measure angry.” For when he says לָךְ, *lak*, with, or, *in thyself*, he reminds Jonah to examine his own heart, as though he said, “Look on thyself as in a mirror: thou wilt see what a boisterous sea is thy soul, being seized as thou art by so mad a rage.” We now then perceive not only the plain sense of the passage, but also the emphasis, which is contained in the questions which Jerome has turned to a meaning wholly contrary. I will not proceed farther; ^{F48} for what remains will be sufficient for to-morrow’s lecture.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou sees us implicated in so many errors, that we often fall through want of thought, and as thou also sees that the violent emotions of our flesh wholly blind whatever reason and judgment there is in us, — O grant, that we may learn to give up ourselves altogether to obey thee, and so honor thy wisdom as never to contend with thee, though all things may happen contrary to our wishes, but patiently to wait for such an issue as it may please thee to grant; and may we never be disturbed by any of the hindrances which Satan may throw in our way, but ever go on towards the mark which thou hast set before us, and never turn aside from thee, until, having gone through all dangers and overcome all impediments, we shall at length reach that blessed rest, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy Son. Amen.

LECTURE EIGHTIETH

<320405> JONAH 4:5

5. So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

5. Et egressus est Jonas ex urbe, et sedit ab oriente contra urbem, et fecit sibi illic tabernaculum, et sedit sub eo in umbra, quousque videret quid fieret in urbe.

It may be here doubted whether Jonah had waited till the forty days had passed, and whether that time had arrived; for if we say that he went out of the city before the fortieth day, another question arises, how could he have known what would be? for we have not yet found that he had been informed by any oracular communication. But the words which we have noticed intimate that it was then known by the event itself, that God had spared the city from destruction; for in the last lecture it was said, that God had repented of the evil he had declared and had not done it. It hence appears that Jonah had not gone out of the city until the forty days had passed. But there comes again another question, what need had he to sit near the city, for it was evident enough that the purpose of God had changed, or at least that the sentence Jonah had pronounced was changed? he ought not then to have seated himself near the city as though he was doubtful.

But I am inclined to adopt the conjecture, that Jonah went out after the fortieth day, for the words seem to countenance it. With regard to the question, why he yet doubted the event, when time seemed to have proved it, the answer may be readily given: though indeed the forty days had passed, yet Jonah stood as it were perplexed, because he could not as yet feel assured that what he had before proclaimed according to God's command would be without its effect. I therefore doubt not but that Jonah was held perplexed by this thought, "Thou hast declared nothing rashly; how can it then be, that what God wished to be proclaimed by his own command and in his own name, should be now in vain, with no corresponding effect?" Since then Jonah had respect to God's command, he could not immediately extricate himself from his doubts. This then was

the cause why he sat waiting: it was, because he thought that though God's vengeance was suspended, his preaching would not yet be in vain, but that the ruin of the city was at hand. This therefore was the reason why he still waited after the prefixed time, as though the event was still doubtful.

Now that this may be more evident, let us bear in mind that the purpose of God was hidden, so that Jonah understood not all the parts of his vocation. God, then, when he threatened ruin to the Ninevites, designed to speak conditionally: for what could have been the benefit of the word, unless this condition was added, — that the Ninevites, if they repented, should be saved? There would otherwise have been no need of a Prophet; the Lord might have executed the judgment which the Ninevites deserved, had he not intended to regard their salvation. If any one objects by saying that a preacher was sent to render them inexcusable, — this would have been unusual; for God had executed all his other judgments without any previous denunciation, I mean, with regard to heathen nations: it was the peculiar privilege of the Church that the Prophets ever denounced the punishments which were at hand; but to other nations God made it known that he was their Judge, though he did not send Prophets to warn them. There was then included a condition, with regard to God's purpose, when he commanded the Ninevites to be terrified by so express a declaration. But Jonah was, so to speak, too literal a teacher; for he did not include what he ought to have done, — that there was room for repentance, and that the city would be saved, if the Ninevites repented of their wickedness. Since then Jonah had learned only one half of his office, it is no wonder that his mind was still in doubt, and could not feel assured as to the issue; for he had nothing but the event, God had not yet made known to him what he would do. Let us now proceed —

<320406> JONAH 4:6-8

6. And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.

6. Et paravit Jehova Deus cucurbitam (vel, hederam,) et ascendere fecit ad Jonam, ut esset umbra super caput ejus, atque liberaret eum a molestia sua; et gavisus est Jonas super hedera (vel, cucurbita) gaudio magno.

7. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

7. Et paravit Deus vermem quum ascenderet aurora postridie, qui percussit hederam et exaruit.

8. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

8. Et accidit, quum exoriretur sol, ut pararet Deus ventum impetuosum (qui obsurdescere facit homines; חרש significat obsurdescere; alii vertunt, ventum arationis, quia verbum illud etiam significat arare; et intelligunt, ventum siccum et frigidum, qualis grassari solet arationis tempore,) et percussit sol super caput Jonae, et defecit; et optavit pro anima sua, ut moretetur; et dixit, Melior mors mea quam vita.

Before I proceed to treat on the contents of these verses, I will say a few things on the word קִיקִיּוֹן, *kikiun*; for there were formerly some disputes respecting this word. Some render it, a gourd; (*eucurbitam*) others think it to have been a cucumber. Free conjectures are commonly made respecting obscure and unknown things. However, the first rendering has been the received one: and Augustine says, that a tumult arose in some church, when the Bishop read the new interpretation of Jerome, who said that it was the ivy. Those men were certainly thoughtless and foolish who were so offended for a matter so trifling; for they ought to have more carefully inquired which version was the best and most correct. And Augustine did not act so very wisely in this affair; for superstition so possessed him, that he was unwilling that the received version of the Old Testament

should be changed. He indeed willingly allowed Jerome to translate the New Testament from the Greek original; but he would not have the Old Testament to be touched; for he entertained a suspicion of the Jews, — that as they were the most inveterate enemies of the faith, they would have tried to falsify the Law and the Prophets. As then Augustine had this suspicion, he preferred retaining the common version. And Jerome relates that he was traduced at Rome, because he had rendered it ivy instead of gourd; but he answered Augustine in a very severe and almost an angry manner; and he inveighed in high displeasure against some Cornelius and another by the name of Asinius Polio, who had accused him at Rome as one guilty of sacrilege, because he had changed this word. I cannot allege in excuse, that they peevishly rejected what was probable. But as to the thing itself, I would rather retain in this place the word gourd, or cucumber, than to cause any disturbance by a thing of no moment. Jerome himself confesses, that it was not ivy; for he says, that it was a kind of a shrub, and that it grows everywhere in Syria; he says that it was a shrub supported by its own stem, which is not the case with ivy; for the ivy, except it cleaves to a wall or to a tree, creeps on the ground. It could not then have been the ivy; and he ought not to have so translated it. He excuses himself and says, that if he had put down the Hebrew word, many would have dreamt it to have been a beast or a serpent. He therefore wished to put down something that was known. But he might also have caused many doubts: “Why! ivy is said to have ascended over the head of Jonah, and to have afforded him a shade; how could this have been?” Now I wonder why Jerome says in one place that the shrub was called in his time Cicion in the Syrian language; and he says in another place in his Commentaries, that it was called in the same language Elkeroa; which we see to be wholly different from the word קִיקִיּוּן, *kikiun*. Now when he answered Augustine I doubt not but that he dissembled; for he knew that Augustine did not understand Hebrew: he therefore trifled with him as with a child, because he was ignorant. It seems to have been a new gloss, I know not what, invented at the time for his own convenience: I doubt not but that he at the moment formed the word, as there is some affinity between קִיקִיּוּן, *kikiun*, and cicion. However it may have been, whether it was a gourd or a shrub, it is not necessary to dispute much how it could have grown so soon into so great a size. Jerome says, that it was a shrub with many leaves, and that it grew to the size of a vine. Be it so; but this shrub grows not in one day, nor in two, nor in three days.

It must have therefore been something extraordinary. Neither the ivy, nor the gourd, nor any shrub, nor any tree, could have grown so quickly as to afford a cover to the head of Jonah: nor did this shrub alone give shelter to Jonah's head; for it is more probable, that it was derived also from the booth which he had made for himself. Jonah then not only sheltered himself under the shrub, but had the booth as an additional cover, when he was not sufficiently defended from the heat of the sun. Hence God added this shrub to the shade afforded by the booth: for in those regions, as we know, the sun is very hot; and further, it was, as we shall see, an extraordinary heat.

I wished to say thus much of the word ivy; and I have spoken more than I intended; but as there have been contentions formerly on the subject, I wished to notice what may be satisfactory even to curious readers. I come now to what is contained in this passage.

Jonah tells us that a gourd or a cucumber, or an ivy, was prepared by the Lord. There is no doubt but that this shrub grew in a manner unusual, that it might be a cover to the booth of Jonah. So I view the passage. But God, we know, approaches nature, whenever he does anything beyond what nature is: this is not indeed always the case; but we generally find that God so works, as that he exceeds the course of nature, and yet from nature he does not wholly depart. For when in the desert he intended to collect together a great quantity of quails, that he might give meat to the people, he raised wind from the east, (^{<041131>}Numbers 11:31.) How often the winds blew without bringing such an abundance of birds? It was therefore a miracle: but yet God did not wholly cast aside the assistance of nature; hence he made use of the wind; and yet the wind could not of itself bring these birds. So also in this place, God had chosen, I have no doubt, a herb, which soon ascended to a great height, and yet far surpassed the usual course of nature. In this sense, then, it is that God is said to have prepared the קִיּוּן, *kikiun*, ^{F49} and to have made it to ascend over Jonah's head, that it might be for a shade to his head and free him from his distress.

But it is said afterwards that a worm was prepared. We see here also, that what seemed to happen by chance was yet directed by the hidden providence of God. Should any one say, that what is here narrated does not commonly happen, but what once happened; to this I answer, — that though God then designed to exhibit a wonderful example, worthy of being

remembered, it is yet ever true that the gnawing even of worms are directed by the counsel of God, so that neither a herb nor a tree withers independently of his purpose. The same truth is declared by Christ when he says, that without the Father's appointment the sparrows fall not on the ground, (<401029> Matthew 10:29.) Thus much as to the worm.

It is now added, *that when the sun arose the day following, a wind was prepared.* We here learn the same thing, — that winds do not of themselves rise, or by chance, but are stirred up by a Divine power. There may indeed be found causes in nature why now the air is tranquil, and then it is disturbed by winds; but God's purpose regulates all these intermediate causes; so that this is ever true — that nature is not some blind impulse, but a law settled by the will of God. God then ever regulates by his own counsel and hand whatever happens. The only difference is, that his works which flow in the usual course have the name of nature; and they are miracles and retain not the name of nature, when God changes their wonted course; but yet they all proceed from God as their author. Therefore with regard to this wind, we must understand that it was not usual or common; and yet that winds are daily no less stirred up by God's providence than this wind of which Jonah speaks. But God wrought then, so to speak, beyond the usual course of nature, though he daily preserves the regular order of nature itself.

Let us now see why this whole narrative has been set down. Jonah confesses that he *rejoiced with great joy*, when he was sheltered from the extreme heat of the sun: but when the shrub withered, he was touched with so much grief that he wished to die. There is nothing superfluous here; for Jonah shows, with regard to his joy and his grief, how tender he was and how susceptible of both. Jonah here confesses his own sensibility, first by saying that he greatly rejoiced, and then by saying that he was so much grieved for the withered shrub, that through weariness of life he instantly desired death. There is then here an ingenuous confession of weakness; for Jonah in a very simple manner has mentioned both his joy and his grief. But he has distinctly expressed the vehemence of both feelings, that we might know that he was led away by his strong emotions, so that in the least things he was either inflamed with anger, or elated with joy beyond any bounds. This then was the case with him in his grief as well as in his joy. But he does not say that he prayed as before; but he adopts the word **שאל**, *shal*, which signifies to desire or wish. *He desired*, it is said, *for his*

soul that he might die. It is hence probable that Jonah was so overwhelmed with grief that he did not lift up his heart to God; and yet we see that he was not neglected by God: for it immediately follows —

<320409> **JONAH 4:9**

9. And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.

9. Et dixit Deus ad Jonam, An bene facis excandescendo apud te super cucurbitam? Et dixit, Bene facio irascendo apud me usque ad mortem.

We see here that God had concealed himself for a time, but did not yet forsake his servant. He often looks on us from behind; that is, though we think that he has forgotten us, he yet observes how we go on, that he may in due time afford help: and hence it is that he recovers and raises up the falling, before we perceive that he is near. This was his manner with Jonah, when he began to address him: for, as we have said, grief had so oppressed the mind of the holy Prophets that it could no longer be raised up to God. Hence he desired to die; and still God did not forsake him. This was no common example of the invaluable mercy of God, with which he favors his own people, even when they precipitate themselves into ruin: such was the case with Jonah, who rushed headlong into a state of despair, and cared not for any remedy. God then did not wait until he was sought, but anticipated miserable Jonah, who was now seeking destruction to himself.

He says, *Doest thou well that thou art thus angry for the gourd?* As though he had said, that he was too violently disturbed for a matter so trifling. And we must ever bear that in mind, of which we spoke more fully yesterday, — that God did not merely reprove his servant, because he did not patiently bear the withering of the gourd — what then? but because he became angry; for in anger there is ever an excess. Since then Jonah was thus grieved beyond measure, and without any restraint, it was justly condemned by God as a fault. I will now not repeat what I said yesterday respecting the enhancing of the crime, inasmuch as Jonah not only murmured on account of the withering of the shrub, but also disregarded himself, and boiled over with displeasure beyond all due limits.

And the answer of Jonah confirms this, *I do well*, he says, *in being angry even to death*. We here see how obstinately the holy Prophet repelled the admonition of God, by which he ought to have been restored to a right mind. He was not ignorant that God spoke. Why then was he not smitten with shame? Why was he not moved by the authority of the speaker, so as immediately to repress the fierceness of his mind? But thus it commonly happens, when the minds of men are once blinded by some wrong feeling; though the Lord may thunder and fulminate from heaven, they will not hear, at least they will not cease violently to resist, as Jonah does here. Since then we find such an example of perverseness in this holy man, how much more ought every one of us to fear? Let us hence learn to repress in time our feelings, and instantly at the beginning to bridle them, lest if they should burst forth to a greater extent, we become at last altogether obstinate. I do well, he says, in being angry even to death. God charged his servant Jonah with the vice of anger; Jonah now indulges himself in his own madness, so that he says that desperation is not a vice: I do not sin, he says, though I am despairing; though I abandon myself to death as with mad fury, I do not yet sin.

Who could have thought that the holy Prophet could have been brought into this state of mind? But let us be reminded, as I have already said, by this remarkable example, how furious and unreasonable are the passions of our flesh. There is, therefore, nothing better than to restrain them, before they gather more strength than they ought; for when any one feeds his vices, this obstinacy and hardness always follow. But to be angry, or to be in a fume even to death, is to feel such a weariness of life, as to give ourselves up of our own accord to death. It was not indeed the design of Jonah to lay violent hands on himself; but though he abstained from violence, he yet, as to the purpose of his mind, procured death to himself; for he submitted not to God, but was carried away by a blind impulse, so that he wished to throw away his life. It now follows —

<320410> **JONAH 4:10-11**

10. Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

10. Et dixit Jehova, Tu pepercisti cucurbitae, in qua non laborasti, et quam non exultisti; filia noctis fuit, et filia noctis transiit (hoc est nata fuit, vel, exorta una nocte, et nocte etiam una emarcuit.)

11. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

11. Et ego non parcerem Nineveh urbi magnae, in qua sunt duodecies decem millia hominum, quorum quisque non novit inter dexteram suam et sinistram suam, et animalia etiam multa?

Here God explains the design he had in suddenly raising up the gourd, and then in causing it to perish or wither through the gnawing of a worm; it was to teach Jonah that misconduct towards the Ninevites was very inhuman. Though we find that the holy Prophet had become a prey to dreadful feelings, yet God, by this exhibition, does in a manner remind him of his folly; for, under the representation of a gourd, he shows how unkindly he desired the destruction of so populous a city as Nineveh.

Yet this comparison may appear ill suited for the purpose. Jonah felt sorry for the gourd, but he only regarded himself: hence he was displeased, because the relief with which he was pleased was taken away from him. As then this inconvenience had driven Jonah to anger, the similitude may not seem appropriate when God thus reasons, Thou wouldest spare the gourd, should I not spare this great city? Nay, but he was not concerned for the gourd itself: if all the gourds of the world withered, he would not have been touched with any grief; but as he felt the greatest danger being scorched by the extreme heat of the sun, it was on this account that he was angry. To this I answer, — that though Jonah consulted his own advantage, yet this similitude is most suitable: for God preserves men for the purpose for which he has designed them. Jonah grieved for the withering of the gourd, because he was deprived of its shade: and God does not create men in vain; it is then no wonder that he wishes them to be saved. We hence see that Jonah was not unsuitably taught by this

representation, how inhumanely he conducted himself towards the Ninevites. He was certainly but one individual; since then he made such an account of himself and the gourd only, how was it that he cast aside all care for so great and so populous a city? Ought not this to have come to his mind, that it was no wonder that God, the Creator and Father, had a care for so many thousands of men? Though indeed the Ninevites were alienated from God, yet as they were men, God, as he is the Father of the whole human race, acknowledged them as his own, at least to such an extent as to give them the common light of day, and other blessings of earthly life. We now then understand the import of this comparison: “Thou wouldest spare,” he says, “the gourd, and should I not spare this great city?”

It hence appears how frivolous is the gloss of Jerome, — that Jonah was not angry on account of the deliverance of the city, but because he saw that his own nation would, through its means, be destroyed: for God repeats again that Jonah’s feeling was quite different, — that he bore with indignity the deliverance of the city from ruin. And less to be endured it is still, that Jerome excuses Jonah by saying that he nobly and courageously answered God, that he had not sinned in *being angry even to death*. That man dared, without any shame or discernment, to invent a pretense that he might excuse so disgraceful an obstinacy. But it is enough for us to understand the real meaning of the Prophet. Here then he shows, according to God’s representation, that his cruelty was justly condemned for having anxiously desired the destruction of a populous city.

But we ought to notice all the parts of the similitudes when he says, *Thou wouldest have spared*, etc. There is an emphasis in the pronoun אַתָּה, *ate*, for God compares himself with Jonah; “Who art thou? Doubtless a mortal man is not so inclined to mercy as I am. But thou takest to thyself this right — to desire to spare the gourd, even thou who art made of clay. Now this gourd is not thy work, *thou hast not labored for it*, it has not proceeded from thy culture or toil; and further, *thou hast not raised it up*, and further still, *it was the daughter of a night, and in one night it perished*; it was an evanescent shrub or herb. If then thou regardest the nature of the gourd, if thou regardest thyself, and joinest together all the other circumstances, thou wilt find no reason for thy hot displeasure. But should not I, who am God, in whose hand are all things, whose prerogative and whose constant practice it is mercifully to bear with men — should not I

spare them, though they were worthy of destruction? and should not I spare a great city? The matter here is not concerning a little plant, but a large number of people. And, in the last place, it is a city, *in which there are a hundred and twenty thousand men who know not how to distinguish between their right hand and the left.*”

We now then see how emphatical are all the parts of this comparison. And though God’s design was to reprove the foolish and sinful grief of Jonah, we may yet further collect a general instruction by reasoning in this manner, “We feel for one another, and so nature inclines us, and yet we are wicked and cruel. If then men are inclined to mercy through some hidden impulse of nature, what may not be hoped from the inconceivable goodness of God, who is the Creator of the whole world, and the Father of us all? and will not he, who is the fountain of all goodness and mercy spare us?”

Now as to the number, Jonah mentions here twelve times ten thousand men, and that is as we have said, one hundred and twenty thousand. God shows here how paternally he cares for mankind. Every one of us is cherished by him with singular care: but yet he records here a large number, that it might be more manifest that he so much regards mankind that he will not inconsiderately fulminate against any one nation. And what he adds, that they could not distinguish between the right hand and the left, is to be referred, I have no doubt, to their age; and this opinion has been almost universally received. Some one, however has expressed a fear lest the city should be made too large by allowing such a number of men: he has, therefore, promiscuously included the old, as well as those of middle age and infants. He says that these could not distinguish between the right hand and the left, because they had not been taught in the school of God, nor understood the difference between right and wrong; for the unbelieving, as we know, went astray in their errors. But this view is too strained; and besides, there is no reason for this comment; for that city, we know, was not only like some great cities, many of which are at this day in Europe, but it surpassed most of the principal cities at this day. We know that in Paris there are more than four hundred thousand souls: the same is the case with other cities. I therefore reject this comment, as though Jonah was here speaking of all the Ninevites. But God, on the contrary, intended to show, that though there was the justest reason for destroying entirely the whole city, there were yet other reasons which justified the suspension of so

dreadful a vengeance; for many infants were there who had not, by their own transgressions, deserved such a destruction.

God then shows here to Jonah that he had been carried away by his own merciless zeal. Though his zeal, as it has been said, arose from a good principle, yet Jonah was influenced by a feeling far too vehement. This God proved, by sparing so many infants hitherto innocent. And to infants he adds the brute animals. Oxen were certainly superior to shrubs. If Jonah justly grieved for one withering shrub, it was far more deplorable and cruel for so many innocent animals to perish. We hence see how apposite are all the parts of this similitude, to make Jonah to loathe his folly, and to be ashamed of it; for he had attempted to frustrate the secret purpose of God, and in a manner to overrule it by his own will, so that the Ninevites might not be spared, who yet labored by true repentance to anticipate the divine judgment.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast, in various ways, testified, and daily continues to testify, how dear and precious to thee are mankind, and as we enjoy daily so many and so remarkable proofs of thy goodness and favor, — O grant, that we may learn to rely wholly on thy goodness, many examples of which thou settest before us, and which thou wouldest have us continually to experience, that we may not only pass through our earthly course, but also confidently aspire to the hope of that blessed and celestial life which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

END OF THE COMMENTARIES ON JONAH.

A TRANSLATION OF CALVIN'S VERSION OF

THE BOOK OF JONAH.

CHAPTER 1

- 1 AND the word of Jehovah came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,
- 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, to that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness has ascended before my face.”
- 3 But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah, and went down to Joppa, and found a ship, which was going to Tarshish; and he paid the fare, and went down into it,, that he might go with them to Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah.
- 4 And Jehovah sent a strong wind on the sea, and a great tempset arose in the sea, and the ship was thought to be breaking:
- 5 And the mariners feared, and cried every one to his god, and cast out the wares, which were in the ship, into the sea, that it might be lightened of them; but Jonah had gone down to the sides of the ship; and he lay down and slept.
- 6 And the pilot came to him, and he said to him, — “What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call on thy God, if so be that God will show himself propitious to us, that we may not perish.”
- 7 And they said each to his friend, — “Come and let us cast lots, that we may know for what cause *is* this evil *come* upon us.” And they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.
- 8 And they said to him, — “Tell us now why has this evil happened to us, what is thy work, and whence comest thou, what is thy country, and from what people art thou?”

- 9** And he said to them, — “I am an Hebrew, and I fear Jehovah, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry *land*.”
- 10** And the men feared with great fear, and said to him, — “Why hast thou done this?” (52) For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Jehovah, because he had told them.
- 11** And they said to him, “What shall we do to thee, that the sea may be still to us?” for the sea was going and was tempestuous.
- 12** And he said to them, — “Take me and cast me into the sea, and the sea will be still to you; for I know that on my account is this great tempest come upon you.”
- 13** But the men toiled to bring back the ship, (59) and they could not; for the sea was going and was tempestuous against them.
- 14** And they cried to Jehovah, and said, — “We beseech, Jehovah, we pray, that we perish not for the life of this man, and lay not on us innocent blood; for thou, Jehovah, hast done as it has seemed good to thee.” (62)
- 15** Then they took Jonah, and cast him into the sea; and the sea stopped from its raging.
- 16** And with great fear, the men feared Jehovah, and sacrificed a sacrifice to Jehovah, and vowed vows.
- 17** And Jehovah provided a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the bowels of the fish three days and three nights.

CHAPTER 2

- 1** And Jonah prayed to Jehovah his God from the belly of the fish,
- 2** And said, — I cried in my distress to Jehovah, and he heard me; (75) From the belly of the grave I cried, thou didst hear my voice.

- 3 But cast me hadst thou into the deep, Into the midst of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me; All thy billows and waves over me
passed:
- 4 Then I said, — “I am driven from the sight of thine eyes; But I
would again see the temple of thy holiness.”
- 5 Beset me did the waters even to the soul, The deep on every
side surrounded me, The sedge was wrapped around my head:
- 6 To the roots of the mountains I descended, The earth with its
bars was around me forever: But to ascend hast thou made my
life from the grave, O Jehovah my God.
- 7 When fail did my soul within me, Jehovah did I remember, And
enter did my prayer into the temple of thy holiness.
- 8 They who observe lying vanities, Their own mercy forsake: (87)
- 9 But I, with the voice of praise, will sacrifice to thee; What I have
vowed will I pay: To Jehovah *belongs* salvation.
- 10 And Jehovah commanded the fish, and it cast forth Jonah on the
dry land.

CHAPTER 3

- 1 And the word of Jehovah came to Jonah the second time,
saying, —
- 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, to that great city, and proclaim to it the
proclamation which I command thee.” (92)
- 3 And Jonah arose, and went to Nineveh, according to the
command of Jehovah.
- 4 Now Nineveh was a very great city, a journey of three days.
And Jonah began to enter a journey of one day, and cried and
said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.”

- 5** And the men of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them:
- 6** For word had come to the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and cast aside his splendid robe from him, and put on sackcloth and sat on ashes;
- 7** And it was proclaimed and published through Nineveh, by the counsel of the king and his nobles, saying, — “Man and beast! Ox and sheep! Let them taste nothing, let them not be fed, and let them not drink water;
- 8** And let man and beast put on sackcloth, and cry to God mightily; (107) and return let every one from his evil way, and from the plunder that is in their hands.
- 9** Who knows, whether God will change and repent, and turn away from the fury of his wrath, that we perish not?”
- 10** And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which he had declared that he would do to them, and did *it* not.

CHAPTER 4

- 1** And Jonah was grievously displeased, and he was very angry; (116) and he prayed to Jehovah, and said, —
- 2** “I pray thee, Jehovah, was not this my word, when I was yet in my own land? I therefore hastened to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a God full of grace, and merciful, slow to wrath, great in kindness, and who repentest of evil.
- 3** And thou, Jehovah, take, I pray, my life from me; for better it is for me to die than to live.”
- 4** And Jehovah said to him, — “Doest thou well in being angry?” (129)

- 5** And Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east over against the city, and made there for himself a tent, and sat under it in the shade, until he saw what might be in the city.
- 6** And Jehovah God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up for Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, and free him from his distress; and Jonah rejoiced for the gourd with great joy.
- 7** God also prepared a worm, when the morning rose the next day, which smote the gourd, and it withered:
- 8** And it was, when the sun arose, that God prepared an impetuous wind, and the sun smote the head of Jonah, and he fainted, and wished for himself that he might die, and said, “Better is my death than my life.”
- 9** And God said to Jonah, — “Doest thou well in being angry for the gourd?” and he said, — “I do well in being angry even unto death.”
- 10** And Jehovah said, — “Thou wouldest have spared the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, and which thou has not raised up; the daughter of a night it was, ^{f50} and *as* the daughter of a night it has passed away;
- 11** And should I not spare Nineveh, this great city, in which there are twelve times ten thousand men, every one of whom knows not his right hand from his left, and also many animals?”

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER ONE

- ^{fi1t} “Prophecy is of a prodigious extent; it commenced from the fall of man, and reaches to the consummation of all things. So many illustrious events falling in, one after another, just as the word of prophecy foretold they should, must afford the most convincing proof that our Religion is, as it claims to be, of divine institution, — a *proof* the more convincing, because it is continually growing upon us; and the farther we are removed from the source of our religion, the clearer is the evidence of its *truth*.” — *Bishop Hurd*.
- ^{fi2t} “Michas plerumque brevis est, pressns, concisus, acutus; nonnunquam ad Hoseae obscuritatem prope accedens; in multis elatus et fervidus, valdeque poeticus.” — Prael. 21
- ^{fi3t} “Dictio elegans, non admodum dissimilis isti Iesaiae.”
- ^{fi4t} This must be qualified; in most parts it is so, but in some, it borders, as *Lowth* says, on the obscurity of Hosea's style.
- ^{fi5t} Those who wish to see this proved at large, may consult Bishop *Newton* on the Prophecies. Vol. 1: Diss. 9.
- ^{fi6t} “Verum ex omnibus minoribus Prophetis nemo videtur aequare sublimitatem, ardorem et audaces spiritus Nahumi: adde quod vaticinium integrum et justum est poema; exordium magnificum est et plane angustum; apparatus ad excidium Ninivae, ejusque excidii descriptio et amplificatio, ardentissimis coloribus exprimatur, et admirabilem habet evidentiam et pondus.” — Prael. 21.
- ^{fi7t} It has been made the groundwork of a most interesting volume of Essays by the late Revelation Thomas *Jones* of Creaton, under the title of “Jonah's Portrait.”
- ^{FT1} He was of Gath-hepher, in the tribe of Zebulun, a part of lower Galilee, ^{<061913>} Joshua 19:13. He prophesied in the reign of Jeroboam the second, king of Israel, who began to reign 823 before Christ, and

reigned in Samaria 41 years. See ^{<121423>}2 Kings 14:23-25.” — *Newcome*.

FT² *Calvin* lays no great stress on the circumstance of the Book commencing with a ׀, but states what he thinks as its probable import. The fact that other Books, such as Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, Ezekiel, and other books, begin thus, is no proof that the copulative here does not intimate what is here stated. *Marckius* and *Cocceius* think that it imports a connection between the different Books of Scripture; and if so, why may it not intimate a connection between this Book and the former Prophecy of Jonah? *Junius* and *Tremelius* render the ׀ “when,” and connect it with “then” at the beginning of the third verse; and it may be so construed at the beginning of most of the other Books. Adopting this rendering, we may translate thus, —

*1. When the word of Jehovah came to Johah,
the son of Amittai, saying*

*2. Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against her, for there
wickedness has ascended before me.*

*3. Then Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish, from the presence of
Jehovah, and went down to Joppa,” etc.*

This reads connected, and the passage admits of this construction, for the copulative ׀ in Hebrew, when repeated, may very frequently be thus rendered, the first by “when,” and the second by “then.” — *Ed.*

FT³ *Marckius* wisely says on another subject, but on a similar occasion, “Extra Scripturam autem audacter hic sapiat nemo;” — “but let no one be here rashly wise beyond Scripture.” — *Ed.*

FT⁴ There is some difference in the account given. *Diodorus Siculus*, as quoted by *Marckius*, says, that if it was in form oblong; one side was 150 stadia, the other 90; so that its circumference must have been 480 stadia. A stadium is nearly equal to a furlong, eight of which make a mile. It must then have been in circuit about 60 miles. Its walls are reported to have been 100 feet *high* — 33 yards and 1 foot, and so *broad* that three chariots might run abreast, and adorned by 1,500 towers, the height of which were 200 feet. From the circumstance of having in it 120,000 not knowing the right hand from the left, supposed to be infants, some think that its population must have been

above two million. It was situated on the river *Tigris* on the eastern side, not far from the present *Mosul*.

In building this city, as reported by *Bochart*, there were no less than 140 myriads of men for eight years. A myriad being ten thousand, the number must have been one million, four hundred thousand. Such a city none has ever built since, was the declaration of *Diodorus*: and there has not probably on record an account of such a city. That it had large gardens, and even fields, within its walls, there can be no doubt. — *Ed.*

FT5 On this success of *Jonah* in meeting with a ship, etc., *Marckius* has these appropriate remarks —

“God sometimes not only suffers the wicked to advance prosperously in their sins, but does not immediately restore the godly in their declensions; nay, he gives them every facility for a time in their downward course, in order that they may know themselves more, and that the glory of God may become thereby more manifest. Foolish then is the sinner, who, having begun life prosperously, concludes that the end will be equally happy.”

Matthew Henry's remarks are of the same import, but still more striking — “Providence seemed to favor his design, and gave him an opportunity to escape: we may be out of the way of duty, and yet may meet with favorable gale. The ready way is not always the right way.”

FT6 This is no doubt its root. It is used when *Saul* is said to *cast* a javelin at *David*, ^{<091811>} 1 Samuel 18:11, and when the Lord threatens to *cast* out the people from his land, ^{<241613>} Jeremiah 16:13. It implies force and power. *Coverdale*'s rendering, as quoted by *Henderson*, strikingly conveys its meaning, “But the Lord hurled a great wynde into the sea.” — *Ed.*

FT7 This perhaps can hardly be said to be a Hebrew idiom. *Marckius*, and also *Henderson*, think it to be a metonymy, the ship is mentioned, instead of the mariners: there is in ^{<420823>} Luke 8:23 an opposite metonymy, the sailors are taken for the ship. *Newcome* renders the sentence, “and it was thought that the ship would be broken in pieces.” If the metonymy be admitted, the rendering would be, “and the mariners thought that they should be shipwrecked.” — *Ed.*

FT8 מלחים, from מלה, salt, “salt-men;” so “mariners,” in our language, from *mare*, are literally sea-men; and sailors are sail-men. Nautae, in Latin, and ναυται in Greek, being from *navis* and ναυς, are properly, ship-men. — *Ed.*

FT9 “Sides,” רכתי, mean no doubt the lower parts. *Jerome* renders it, *ad interiora navis*; the Septuagint, εἰς την κοίλην του πλοίου — to the belly cavity of the ship. — *Ed.*

FT10 “We see in this instance the great danger in which unconscious sinners are often involved, that the solace sought by them departs from them, that a dead sleep remains, and even increases under God’s judgment, and that in the performance of duty the godly are sometimes more slothful than the ungodly.” — *Ed.*

FT11 רב החבל, the master of the rope or roping: ὁ πρωρευς, the prowman, the boatswain. — *Sept. Nauclerus*, pilot, is the word used by *Calvin*. — *Ed.*

FT12 מהלך נרדם, “τί σὺ πηγχεις — why dost thou snore?” — *Sept.* “Quid tu sopore deprimeris — why art thou oppressed with deep sleep?” — *Jerome*. “Quid dormis — why sleepest thou?” — *Dathius*. “How is it, thou art fast asleep?” — *Henderson*. “What ails thee? Sleeping!” — *Benjoin*. The first pare is well rendered by the last author, but not the other; for נרדם, only found as a verb in Niphal, ever means a *deep* sleep. It is applied to Sisera, in Jael’s tent, <070421> Judges 4:21, and to the sleep of death, <197606> Psalm 76:6. The rendering then ought to be, “What ails thee? Being fast asleep.” — *Ed.*

FT13 *Calvin* is quite right here. The verb יתעשת occurs only here in Hithpael; and once as a verb in Kal, <240528> Jeremiah 5:28, עשתו, they “shine,” applied to fat men, and once as a participle, applied to iron, ברזל עשות, “bright iron,” or iron brightened, or made to shine, <262719> Ezekiel 27:19. It occurs as a noun in three other places, עשת, Canticles 5:14, עשתות in <181205> Job 12:5, and עשחות in <19E604> Psalm 146:4. The idea of shining, brightness, or splendor, comports better with the context than that of thought, as given in our version in the two last places. It occurs once in its Chaldec form in <270603> Daniel 6:3, and there, no doubt, it means thought, or intention, or design. Following the usual import of the Hithpael conjugation, we

may render the word here, “It may be, that God will himself shine upon us;” which means “will show himself gracious to us.” The Septuagint gives the sense, but not the ideal meaning of the verb, **δυνασθη**, *may save*, and so does *Pagininus*, *placeatur* — *may be pacified*. Both *Newcome* and *Henderson* are wrong here: they follow our common version. *Dathius* retains the right idea, “se nobis clementem exhibeat.” — *Ed.*

FT14 “The servants of God are sometimes surpassed, reproved, and stimulated, by those far below them, yea, even by brute animals: a salutary admonition, from whatever quarter it may come, ought never be despised.” — *Marckius*.

“If the professors of religion do an ill thing, they must expect to hear of it from those who make no such profession.” — *M. Henry*.

FT15 **בשלמי**, this is a singular combination, two relatives with two prepositions — “through what — for what.” It is in a more complete form in the next verse, **באשר למי**; **ש** in the first instance stands for **אשר**, what. The first may be rendered consistently with the context, “through whom — for whom:” but the context in the eight verse requires it to be “through what — for what.” — *Ed.*

FT16 Similar is the view given by *Jerome*. “We ought not, for this example, to put implicit confidence in lots, nor to connect with it the instance recorded in the Acts, when Matthias was chosen an Apostle by lot, since privileges granted to individuals cannot make a common rule, (*cum privilegia singulorum non possint legem facere communem.*)”

FT17 This answer reverses the order of the questions. He answers the last question first. “Whence comest thou, and what is thy country?” The answer is, “I am Hebrew.” The previous question was, “What is thy work,” or occupation? To this he answers, “I fear Jehovah,” etc. This was his calling, his work, his occupation. “Fear,” of course, includes worship and service. This ought to be the work and occupation of all. But to the first question, as to what evil he had done, he gives no answer. *Calvin* supposes that the whole is not here related, but is to be gathered from what follows. It is, however, probable that he had previously told them, that is, before the storm arose, that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord: he therefore left them to conclude what evil it was which he had done. It may be inquired why

he said that he was “Hebrew,” and not that he was an Israelite, as the case really was, for he belonged to the ten tribes, and not to the kingdom of Judah; and Israelites, and not Hebrews seem to have been then the common name of the ten tribes. The reason may be, that as the Israelites were then for the most part idolatrous, he wished to show that he was a true descendant of the patriarchs, who were God’s faithful servants, real Hebrews, passengers, sojourners, and pilgrims, as the word imparts, on the earth. — *Ed.*

FT18 “Non Deos quos invocatis, et qui salvare non possunt, sed Deum coeli qui mare fecit et aridam, mare in quo fugio, aridam de qua fugio,” etc. — *Jerome.*

FT19 מַה-זָּאת עָשִׂיתָ, — “What this thou hast done?” “τί τοῦτο ἐποίησας — what this thou hast done?” — *Sept.* “Quid (*i.e.*, cur) hoc fecisti — why hast thou done this?” — *Marckius*; so *Jerome*, and *Drusius*, and *Dathius*. “What is this thou hast done?” — *Henderson*. It is not a question, requiring a reason for what he had done, but rather an exclamation — “What an evil is this which thou has done!” They judged of it by the effects; for they knew before that he had fled from the presence of the Lord; and now they perceived how great an evil it was. — *Ed.*

FT20 Literally, “that the sea may cease from upon us.” The waves were rolling over them; hence מַעֲלֵינוּ, from upon us. That the sea may be calm *around* us, is to give a meaning to the word which it never has. — *Ed.*

FT21 כִּי הַיָּם הוֹלֵךְ וּמַעַר, “ὅτι ἡ θάλασσα ἐπορευετο καὶ ἐξηγειρε μαλλον κλυδωνα — for the sea went and more raised the swell.” — *Sept.* “Quia mare ibat et intumescebat; — for the sea did go and swell.” — *Jerome*, *Grotius*, and the *Vulgate*. “For the sea grew more and more tempestuous.” — *Newcome*. The verb הוֹלֵךְ, connected as here with another verb, does not always mean increase, but continuance. See <010803> Genesis 8:3; <170904> Esther 9:4. Literally it is, “For the sea was going on, and was tempestuous,” that is, it continued to be tempestuous. An increase of violence seemed not to have been hardly possible, for a shipwreck was previously dreaded. *Jerome*, in a strain rather imaginary, but striking, says, “For the sea went and did swell, — it went, as it had been commanded, — it went, to manifest the

vengeance of its Lord, — it went, to prosecute a runaway Prophet; and it *swelled* at every moment, and rose, as it were, in larger billows, while the mariners were delaying, to show that they could not put off the vengeance of its Creator.” — *Ed.*

FT22 Literally, “and the men labored to return to dry land.” The ideal meaning of **חָתַר** is to dig, or to dig through, ^{<182416>} Job 24:16; ^{<261207>} Ezekiel 12:7: but it is here in its secondary sense of laboring or toiling. **לָהֵשִׁיב**, to return, must be taken here intransitively, though generally it bears in Hiphil a transitive sense. “**Καὶ παρεβιάζοντο οἱ ἄνδρες τοῦ ἐπιστρεψαὶ πρὸς τὴν γῆν** — And the men strove to return to land.” — *Sept.* And the men rowed hard to regain the land.” — *Henderson.* — *Ed.*

FT23 **אָנָּה** and **אָנִי** are particles of entreaty or exclamation, and may be rendered, “I, or, we pray,” according to the context. Here they should be, “We pray.” They are sometimes rendered, Oh! Alas! Now. — *Ed.*

FT24 “Hoc est, ne nobis imputes caedem viri justī — Impute not unto us the slaughter of a just man.” — *Marckius.* See ^{<070924>} Judges 9:24; ^{<402724>} Matthew 27:24. — *Ed.*

FT25 Some render this sentence in the present tense, as *Marckius*, “Tu enim Jehovah sicut vis facis — for thou, Jehovah, doest as thou willest.” The verbs are in the past tense, but this tense in Hebrew includes often both times, — “Thou hast done and doest, as thou hast willed and willest:” and this seems to be the full import of the passage. *Mercerius*, quoted by Poole, gives this paraphrase, — “All these things have taken place through thine appointment, — that Jonah came to the ship, that a storm has been raised, that the lot has fallen on Jonah, and that he has confessed his sin: we unwillingly do this dreadful deed, but this is understood to be thy will.” *Drusius* took the words as referring to the time then present, for he expresses the meaning thus: “Tu vis ut in mare dejectiatur: fiat igitur quod vis; nam voluntati tuae quis resistat? Thou willest that he should be cast into the sea: be then that done which thou willest; for who can resist thy will?” According to this view, it is an expression of acquiescence in God’s will respecting Jonah. But both *Newcome* and *Henderson* retain our common version. *Dathius* reads, “Tu enim, O Jova, pro arbitrato tuo agis. — For thou, O Jehovah, doest according to thine own will.” — *Ed.*

^{FT26} “The first,” says *Adam Clarke*, “that perhaps was ever offered on board a vessel, since the ark floated on the waters of the great deluge.” How uselessly have learned men often employed their talents, trying to improve what is simply and plainly related. *Jerome* allegorizes this act of the mariners, and says that their sacrifice was that of praise. A Jewish Rabbi, *Jonathan*, makes an addition to the sentence — that they *said* that they would sacrifice to Jehovah; and *Grotius* adopts his addition. Another Rabbi, *Elieser*, has fabricated a fine tale, that they returned immediately to Joppa, went up to Jerusalem, and were circumcised! The fact alone is stated here, as to when and where we know nothing, and it signifies nothing to us; only that the most obvious import of the narrative is, that they *did* offer a sacrifice on board the vessel, immediately after the storm ceased. — *Ed.*

^{FT27} . The verb מָנָה does not necessarily include the idea of creation, but its meaning is, to distribute, to arrange, to order, to provide, to prepare; and yet this preparation may involve the exercise of a creative power, as in the case of the gourd mentioned in the fourth chapter, for it is the same verb. Though it might be an indigenous plant, yet to provide it so quickly in one night was the act of Divine power. So also as to this fish, it might or it might not have been one usually found in that part of the sea. To provide it, but bringing it to the spot, was as much a miracle as to provide it by a new act of creation. To allow the one and to deny the other, is wholly unreasonable. The whole was clearly miraculous: and the discovery of any such fish now does not in the least render the transaction less miraculous. Every part of it must be ascribed to a Divine interposition; and let those stumble who are resolved to stumble. It has been supposed to have been the “whale,” because the word κητος is used in the reference made to Jonah in ^{<401240>} Matthew 12:40: but that word is a general term applied to a large fish, and does not necessarily mean the whale. κητος, says *Ribera*, in his comment on Jonah, non certae speciei, sed generis nomen est, et piscem quemvis magnum significat. — *Ed.*

CHAPTER TWO.

^{FT28} It is remarkable that several sentences in this prayer, as it has been observed by *Marchius* and *Henderson*, are exactly the same, not only

in sense, but also, in most instances, in words, with passages in the Psalms. The first clause of this verse is found in ^{<19C001>}Psalm 120:1, only the words are differently arranged. The last clause of the third verse, both in words and order, is the same with a distich in ^{<194207>}Psalm 42:7. The beginning of the fourth verse agrees nearly with ^{<193122>}Psalm 31:22; and so does the fifth verse with a line in ^{<196901>}Psalm 69:1, one word being different. The first clause of the seventh verse is found in the very same words in ^{<19E203>}Psalm 142:3; and the first line in the eighth verse is ^{<193106>}Psalm 31:6, with the exception of one letter; and the last words of the ninth verse are to be met within ^{<190308>}Psalm 3:8, only the order is reversed. “On the supposition,” says *Henderson*, “that Jonah was familiar with the Psalms, it was very natural for him to incorporate sentences taken from them with his own language.” — *Ed.*

^{FT29} “No place amiss for prayer, *I will that men pray everywhere*; where ever God casts us we may find a way open heavenwards, if it be now our own fault. Jonah was now in the bottom of the sea, yet out of the depths he cries to God.” — *M. Henry*. “It may be asked, How could Jonah either pray or breathe in the stomach of a fish? Very easily, if God so willed it. And let the reader keep this constantly in view: the whole is a *miracle*, from Jonah’s being swallowed by the fish, till he was cast ashore by the same animal. It was God that had *prepared* the great fish; it was the Lord that *spake* to the fish, and *caused* it to vomit Jonah on the dry land. All is miracle.” — *Adam Clarke*. — *Ed.*

^{FT30} He relates here, as it appears from the preceding, “and he said,” the prayer he offered when in the fish’s bowels, and not a prayer offered after his deliverance. Some have entertained the latter opinion, because some of the verbs here are in the past tense: but this circumstance only shows that he continued to pray from the time when he was swallowed by the fish to the time when he was delivered. It was a continued act. It is the same as though he said, “I have called, and do call on Jehovah.” *Marckius*, and also *Dathius*, render the verbs in the present tense, “I call,” etc. The following is a translation according to the view of this prayer, —

***3. I call in my distress on Jehovah, and he will answer me;
From the belly of the grave I cry, — thou hearest my voice.***

4. *When thou didst send me to the deep, into the midst of the waters,
And the flood surrounded me, —
Thy billows and waves over me passed;*
5. *Then I said, I am banished from the sight of thine eyes; —
Yet I will again look towards the temple of thy holiness.*
6. *Encompass me do the waters to the soul,
The deep surrounds me,
The sedge is wrapped around my head:*
7. *To the cuttings off of the mountains have I descended;
The earth! Its bars are continually around me:
But thou wilt bring from destruction my life,
O Jehovah, my God.*
8. *When overwhelmed within me was my soul,
Jehovah did I remember;
And come to thee shall my prayer —
To the temple of thy holiness.*
9. *They who regard idols of vanity,
Their own mercy forsake:*
10. *But I, with the voice of praise, will sacrifice to thee,
What I have vowed will I fulfill:
Salvation belongs to Jehovah.*

“The cuttings off,” in verse 7, says *Parkhurst*, were those parts which were *cut off* from the mountains at the deluge. The Septuagint has **σχισμας** — rents-clefts. Roots, bottoms, foundations, have been adopted by some, but not consistently with the meaning of the original word, — “The bars or bolts” of the earth convey the idea of impediments in his way to return to the earth. They were “around” him, or literally “upon” him, **בער**, that is, they were, as it were, closed upon him. — *Ed.*

FT31 “He calls them God’s billows and his waves, not because he made and rules them, but because he had now commissioned them against Jonah, and ordered them to afflict and terrify, but not to destroy him. These words are plainly quoted by Jonah from ^{<194207>}Psalm 42:7. What David spoke figuratively and metaphorically, Jonah applies to himself as literally fulfilled.” — *M. Henry.*

FT32 “Here prayer is *personified*, and is represented as a *messenger* going from the *distressed* and entering into the temple of God, and standing before him. This is a very fine and delicate image.” — *Adam Clarke*.

FT33 הַבְּלִי-שׁוֹא, “Idols of vanity or falsehood,” *i.e.*, false, or deceitful, or vain idols. הַבְּלִי means vapor, smoke, breath, vanity, inanity: but in the plural number it is applied for the most part to idols. See <053221> Deuteronomy 32:21; <111613> 1 Kings 16:13, 26. שׁוֹא is a lie, which is vain — useless, and false — deceptive. *Marckius* renders the words, “Vanitates inanitatis — vanities of inanity” *Junius* and *Tremelius*, “Vanitates mendaces — mendacious vanities;” *Septuagint*, “ματαῖα καὶ Ψευδῆ — vain and false things.” “He thus calls idols,” says an author in *Poole’s Syn.*, “and all those things in which any one, excluding God, trusts; which are nothing, and can do nothing, and which deceive their worshippers.” This is true, that is, that all other things, as well as idols, are, apart from God, vain, and worthless, and deceptive; but the reference here no doubt is to idols. They are not only empty, but deceptive. — *Ed*.

FT34 חֶסֶדָם יַעֲזֹבוּ, “Their mercy or goodness they forsake,” that is, the mercy exhibited and offered to them by God; or, if we render it goodness, it means their chief good, which is God. The Psalmist calls God his goodness in <19E402> Psalm 144:2, חֶסֶדִי, “my goodness,” the giver of all his goodness, or his chief good. *Dathius* gives very correctly the meaning of the two lines in these words —

*“Qui vana idola colunt,
Felicitatis suae auctorem deserunt —
They who worship vain idols,
Desert the author of their own happiness.”*

More literally —

*“They who attend on the idols of vanity,
Their own goodness forsake.”*

There is a contrast between vain idols and their own goodness, that is, the goodness received by them from God. *Grotius* gives this paraphrase, “They who worship idols are vain; for they forsake their own mercy, that is, God, who is able to help them in their distress.” *Henry* suggests another view, “They who follow their own inventions, as *Jonah* had done, when he fled from the presence of the lord to go to

Tarshish, forsake their own mercy, that mercy which they may find in God.” — *Ed.*

CHAPTER 3

^{FT35} Literally, “And proclaim to or against her the proclamation which I declare to thee.” The Septuagint is, “Και κηρυξον εν αυτη κατα το κηρυγμα το εμπροσθεν ο εγω ελαλησα προς σε — And preach in it the former preaching which I have spoken to thee.” עליה in five MSS., as in chapter 1:2, “against her,” and not אליה, “to her.” אליו דבר אשר אנכי דבר, “which I *am* speaking or declaring to thee.” דבר is a participle; being preceded by a nominative, it will admit of an auxiliary verb either in the past, present or future tense, according to the context; though it is often used to express the present time.

Newcome renders the sentence thus — “And cry unto her *in* the words which I *shall* speak unto thee;” *Henderson* more paraphrastically thus — “And make the proclamation to it which I order thee;” and adds the following remarks, — “Be my herald, and faithfully deliver my message. The word κηρυξ in Greek answers to the Hebrew קורא, *kore*, both signifying a *crier*, a *herald*, a *preacher*; one that makes proclamation with a *loud* and *earnest* cry. Such was John Baptist, <234003> Isaiah 40:3; such was Jesus Christ, <430718> John 7:18-37; and such were all his apostles. And such earnestness becomes a ministry that has to do with immortal souls, asleep and dead in sin, hanging on the brink of perdition, and insensible of their state. The soft speaking, gentle toned, unmoved preacher, is never likely to awaken souls.”

Henry considers that the commission was not specifically explained to him then. “Jonah must go,” he says, “with implicit faith: he shall not know till he comes thither what message he must deliver.” — *Ed.*

^{FT36} The original is, “And Nineveh was a city great to God” — לאלהים עיר-גדולה. The remark of *Henry* is, “So the Hebrew phrase is, meaning no more than as we render it, *exceeding great*; this honor that language doth to the great God, that great things derive their denomination from him” Though the form of the expression here is different from what we find in other places, when God is taken in this sense, as in <198010> Psalm 80:10, ארזי-אל, cedars of God, that is, tall

or great cedars, — yet there is no other sense that comports with this place. This is the view of *Dathius*, *Drusius*, *Newcome*, and many others. Some render it, *great through God*, and *Grotius* seems to have taken it in this sense, for he explains it by “*Deo eam augente* — God having increased it.” *Henderson* considers ל here in the sense of לפני, before, and refers to ^{<011009>}Genesis 10:9. But this has hardly a meaning in this connection. — *Ed.*

^{FT37} אמן באלהים, “And they believed in God. The verb אמן in Hiphil is ever followed by ב or ל, except in one instance by את in ^{<071120>}Judges 11:20. When followed by ב it seems to mean, to give credit to what is said, to believe one’s testimony, or the truth of what is referred to. To believe then in God is to believe the truth of what he declares, to believe his word. Hence in ^{<142020>}2 Chronicles 20:20, Jehosophat said to the people, “Believe in the Lord your God,” האמינו ביהוה אלהיכם; and he adds, “Believe [in] his Prophets,” האמינו בנביאיו. It is the word of God, and the word of the Prophets, which was the same, or the truth or veracity of God and of his Prophets, that they For I have believed [in] thy commandments,” במצותיך, that is, in the truth of thy commandments. — When the verb in Hiphil is followed by ל, the idea of reliance or dependance is more especially conveyed, though in many instances there is hardly a difference to be recognized, except the context be minutely observed. Among other passages, the verb in its Hiphil form is followed by ב, in ^{<011506>}Genesis 15:6, ^{<021431>}Exodus 14:31, ^{<042012>}Numbers 20:12, ^{<121714>}2 Kings 17:14, ^{<202625>}Proverbs 26:25, ^{<241206>}Jeremiah 12:6; — and by ל in ^{<020401>}Exodus 4:1-8, ^{<050923>}Deuteronomy 9:23, ^{<111007>}1 Kings 10:7, ^{<19A624>}Psalms 106:24, ^{<234310>}Isaiah 43:10, ^{<244014>}Jeremiah 40:14.

The Septuagint renders believing in God by πιστευσαν τω θεω: so does Paul in ^{<450403>}Romans 4:3, ^{<480306>}Galatians 3:6; but he retains the Hebrew form in ^{<450405>}Romans 4:5, πιστευουσι επι τον, etc. *Calvin* here conveys the same meaning by “crediderunt Deo — believed God:” that is, the Ninevites gave credit to what God declared by Jonah, they believed God’s word. — *Ed.*

^{FT38} *Grotius*, as well as *Junius* and *Tremelius*, had the same view of the verse, by rendering the verb in the tense here proposed. *Quia*

pervenerat is the version of the former; and the version of the latter is, *Quu enim pervenisset*. Our own version and that of *Newcome* seem also to favor this view, by rendering ל “for,” as giving a reason for what is said in the preceding verse: but *Henderson* has “and,” and *Marckius* the same, and also the Septuagint. What *Calvin* states as to the manner of speaking often adopted in Hebre, is no doubt true. But *Henry* thinks that the people “led the way,” and that what they commenced was afterwards enforced and made general by the order of the king and his nobles. — *Ed.*

FT39 Who this king was is a matter of conjecture. “About thirteen years,” says *Newcome*, “after the death of Jeroboam II., king of Israel, Pul, king of Assyria, invaded Israel. So that Pul, or his predecessor, may have been the king here mentioned.” Others think that he was Sardanapalus, a character notorious in history for his luxurious, effeminate, and debauched life. — *Ed.*

FT40 Ον τη νηστεια προσεσχεν, αλλα τη αποχη των κακων — “He [God] did not regard fasting, but abstinence from evils.” — *Theodoret*. “It is not enough,” says *Henry*, “to fast for sin, but we must fast from sin, and in order to the success of our prayers, must no more regard iniquity in our hearts... The work of a fast-day is not done with the day; no, then the hardest and most needful part of the work begins, which is to turn from sin, and to live a new life, and not to return with the dog to his vomit.” — *Ed.*

FT41 *Calvin* has omitted to notice the words at the beginning of the seventh verse. His version is, *Et promulgavit ac dixit*, etc., but this rendering comports not with what follows. The verbs are evidently in future Niphal, preceded by a ל conversive, and ought to be rendered impersonally, “And it was proclaimed and published,” etc. And so *Newcome* renders them; and this is in conformity with the Septuagint, Και εκηρυχθη και ερρεθη εν τη Νινευη — “And it was proclaimed and published in Nineveh.” *Henderson* gives a paraphrase, “And a proclamation was made through Nineveh.” — *Ed.*

FT42 בקרב, with vigor. “Εκτεζῶς — intensely, earnestly.” — *Sept. Vehementer* — vehemently.” — *Grotius*. “*Totis viribus* — with all their powers.” — *Mercerius*. “*Cum intensione valida* — with strong intensity” — *Marckius*. “In prayer,” says *Henry*, “we must cry

mightily, with a fixedness of thought, firmness of faith, and fervor of pious and devout affections. — *Ed.*

FT43 Yet *Henry* does in a manner apply this mighty crying to the beasts. “Let even the brute creatures do it according to their capacity; let their cries and moans for want of food be graciously construed as cries to God; as the cries of young ravens are, ^{<183841>}Job 38:41; and of the young lions, ^{<19A421>}Psalms 104:21.” — *Ed.*

FT44 A *rapacite*, from robbery, extortion, plunder מִזִּדְּמָה, from violence, outrage, or injustice done by force or violence: it means tyrannical injustice. “Απο της αδικιας — from injustice,” wrong, iniquity. — *Sept.* But as it is said to be in their hand, it means, by a metonymy, the plunder got by injustice, exercised tyrannically.

Marckius observes that the similitude here is first taken from the feet, and then taken from the hands. The feet are not to go in the evil way, nor the hands employed in doing what is unjust. *Henry* explains the passage very fully and yet concisely, “let them turn every one from his evil way — the evil way of his heart — and the evil way of his conversation; and particularly from the violence that is in their hands, — let them restore what they have unjustly taken, and make reparation for the wrong they have done, — and let them not any more oppress those they have power over, or defraud those they have dealings with.” — *Ed.*

CHAPTER FOUR

FT45 The two verbs used here are evidently to be construed as impersonals. The most literal rendering would be thus, —

*“And it was an evil to Jonah, a great evil;
and wrath was to him,” or, “he was wroth.”*

Evil means often grief or distress, and so it is here: but the verb חָרָה, properly rendered in our version, “very angry,” seldom if ever, means grief. It is sometimes rendered “grieved” in our version; but in every instance that I can find, it means the grief of anger or displeasure. It occurs twice in Genesis 4, in exactly similar form as we find it here, followed by the preposition ל, ויחר לקין מאד, “and Cain was very wroth,” or literally, “and there was wrath to Cain very much,” version

5. And then in the following verse we have the like form, **כָּרַח לָדָּם**, “Why are thou wroth?” or, “Why is wrath to thee?” The phrase here is, **לּוֹ וַיִּחַר**, “and wrath was to him.” What seems to have made some commentators to change wrath or anger to grief, as has been a desire to screen the guilt of Jonah. But the whole narrative clearly shows that he was so displeased as to be angry. His pettish request to die is a sufficient proof of this. Calvin was not a man to trifle with the word of God for this purpose, or for any other: nor was he at a loss to account for the sin of Jonah, without denying his piety. It is only shallow Christians, and such as have only the outward shell of religion, who are reduced to this dilemma.

Marckius very justly observes, “That though all the works of God are altogether blameless (irreprehensibilia,) yet there is hardly anything which is not sometimes blamed by our most foolish flesh (carne insipientissima.) Thus not only the world, God’s enemy, sins against him; but even his own people, who honor him, openly show, one while, that his severity, and at another time that his kindness, displease them, as though they were not befitting.” — *Ed.*

^{FT46} Added here shall be *Marckius*’ excellent explanation of this passate, as given in ^{<290213>} Joel 2:13. It corresponds materially with that of *Calvin*, — “Ipse est **הַנּוֹן**, *gratiosus*, apud LXX., et Hieronymum, **ελεημων**, *benignus*, h. e. ut voces junctas sic distinguamus commodé, in creaturas praeter omne earum meritum *benefictus*; deinde **רַחוּם**, *misericors*, apud LXX., **οικτίρμων**, h.e. tenerrimo amore motus in miseros ad illus succurrendum et indulgendum; tum **אֲרֵךְ אַפַּיִם** *longanumis*, apud LXX., et Hieronymum, **μακροθυμος**, *patiens*, h.e. tardus ad iram, seu judicia sua satis facilé et satis diu differens; adhuc **רַב־חַסֵּד**, *amplius benignitate*, apud LXX., et hieronymum, **πολυελεος**, *multae misericordiae*, h.e. bonitatem demonstrans intensissime, latissime et diutissime, inter homines; tandem quod aliis vocibus in Exodo exprimitur, **נַחַם עַל הָרַעַת**, non *consolabilis*, sed *poenitens super malo*, apud LXX., **μετανοων ἐπὶ ταῖς κακίαις**, apud Hieronymum, *praestabilis super malitia*, sive *poenitens*, — h.e. malum non culpae ab hominibus commissum, sed poenae, seu afflictionis, juxta Hieronymum, coll. ^{<400634>} Matthew 6:34, à se immittendum aut immissum homini, ad hujus resipiscentiam facilé arcens vel auferens,

adeoque *placabilis*, juxta propositum suum immutabile et promissa generalia, <241807> Jeremiah 18:7, 8; 26:3, etc., et finem judicii omnis, qui est, malum peccati dedocere. Quomodo poenitentia Deo, respectu mutati operis sui, et verbi sui absque explicita conditione antea propositi, saepe tribuitur, <010606> Genesis 6:6; <023214> Exodus 32:14; <091511> 1 Samuel 15:11 etc.; alias respectu decreti longissimi ab eo arcenda, <042319> Numbers 23:19; <091529> 1 Samuel 15:29; Jac. 1:17, etc.; notante dudum *Theodoreto*, et praeunte *Jonathane*, apud quem dicitur, *revocens verbum suam ab inducendo malo*. Ita haec bonitatis nomina Deo, per Scripturae testimonia et clarissima rerum documenta, verissimé competunt.” — *Ed.*

FT47 This clause has been variously rendered. The original words are these, להיטב חרה לך. It is not to the point to say, as *Dr. Henderson* does, that the first word is sometimes rendered adverbially, as meaning “greatly,” etc.; for in other places it is rendered as a verb, “to be good,” or “to do good.” It depends wholly on the form of the sentence what rendering is the most suitable. Both the construction of the words and the connection of the passage seem to favor the literal rendering. The first ה is the *an* of the Latin, *whether*, it is an interrogation. Then the rendering is, “Whether it is good,” or, “Is that good?” Jonah had said before that it was “good” for him to die rather than to live; for it is the same word in a different form — כִּי טוֹב מוֹתִי מֵחַיִּי, “for good my death rather than my life.” Then the question to him is, “Is it good *that* thou art wrathful,” or literally, “*that* wrath is to thee?” the verb חָרָה, as in the first verse, is to be construed impersonally.

The rendering, “Art thou much vexed?” is pointless and vapid. It is indeed countenanced by the Septuagint; but we must remember that on some points there is a wrong leaning in that version, and this is one of those points. As in the case of Jerome and the early Fathers, there was a disposition and an attempt to lessen and even to obliterate all the faults and defects of the ancient saints, so it was evidently with the authors of this version. Superstition and Pharisaism must have all their saints perfect, while the word of God represents all true saints as imperfect in the present state, but aiming at, and longing for, perfection, and fully expecting to enjoy it hereafter.

The version of *Newcome* is, “Doest thou well that *thine anger* is kindled?” Kindling or heat, that is, of anger or wrath, is the ideal

meaning of the verb. *Junius* and *Tremelius*, as well as *Dathius*, consider that anger, and not grief is meant. *Dr. Adam Clarke's* version is this, "Is anger good for thee?" which is certainly very literal; or, as the verb is in the causative mood, it might be rendered, "Can anger do good to thee?" It may be doubted whether here, and in the ninth verse, where the same phrase twice occurs, this rendering is the most obvious and natural. — *Ed.*

FT48 Appended here is this note in the margin, — "Putavit, cessante horologio, se ante tempus finire;" — "He thought that, through the clock stopping, he had finished before the time." — *Ed.*

FT49 Much has been written on the character of this plant. Modern critics have pretended to determine that it was the *Ricinus*, commonly called *Palma Christi*. It matters not what it was: its growth was doubtless miraculous. It may have been an indigenous plant, it may have been such a plant as never grew before or after. Two things are evident — God prepared it, and prepared it to shelter Jonah. In a translation it would have been better either to retain the original name, or to give it the general name of a plant or shrub. To call it a gourd, an ivy, or a cucumber, is to convey an incorrect idea. — *Ed.*

TRANSLATION FOOTNOTE

FT50 It is literally, "the son of a night," but as *cucurbita*, gourd, is feminine, *Calvin* adopted *filia* instead of *filius*. — *Ed.*