

THE AGES DIGITAL LIBRARY
COMMENTARY

**COMMENTARY
ON THE LAMENTATIONS
OF THE PROPHET
JEREMIAH**

by John Calvin

Books For The Ages
AGES Software • Albany, OR USA
Version 1.0 © 1998

PRELECTIONS OF JOHN CALVIN

ON

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH

PREFACE

I undertake now to explain The Lamentations of Jeremiah. We must inquire when the Book was composed by the Prophet, and also what was the object of the author. Grossly mistaken was *Jerome*, who thought that it is the Elegy which Jeremiah composed on the death of Josiah; for we see nothing here that is suitable to that event. There is indeed mention made in one place of a king, but what is said there cannot be applied to Josiah; for he was never driven into exile, but was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers. From the whole contents of the Book we may justly conclude, that it was written after the city was destroyed, and the people led into exile.

Some think that Jeremiah, before this calamity happened, historically described it, and that he thus prophesied of what was future and yet unknown. But this is by no means probable; for Jeremiah here sets before the eyes of all, those things which they knew as facts; and we shall easily discover that his manner of stating things is wholly different from that used in prophetic writings. There is, then, no doubt but that Jeremiah, after the city was destroyed and the Temple burnt, bewailed the miserable state of his own nation, not after the manner of heathens, but that he might shew that even in so disastrous a state of things some benefit might be derived from what he says. And this is what ought to be especially noticed; for except we bear this in mind, the Book will lose its peculiar interest, but if we direct our minds to that desolation, which wholly dejected not only the people in general, but also the Prophet himself, so that he lost all hope, we may surely hence derive no small benefit. It is an

easy thing to extol in high terms the favor of God in prosperity, and also to exhort those who have reasons to hope well to entertain confidence, and to bring forward God's promises, that the minds of the godly may recumb on them; but when things are in a state of despair, and God seems to have forsaken his Church, since prophecy still remains in its force, and God appears as stretching forth his hand to the miserable, and to such as are almost in a hopeless state, we hence derive much benefit, and this is the chief use of what is taught here. But. we see that Jeremiah, when the kingdom had fallen, when the king with all his children was exposed to extreme disgrace, when in short the covenant of God seemed wholly abolished, still continued to discharge his office, which he certainly did not do in vain.

When, therefore, he understood that his teaching would not be without fruit, he was thus induced to speak first of God's judgments; secondly, to exhort the people to repentance; thirdly, to encourage them to hope; and lastly, to open the door for prayer to God, so that the people in their extremities might venture to flee to God's mercy; which could not have been done without faith.

We now in a measure understand for what purpose this Book was written by Jeremiah: his object was to shew that though nothing in the land appeared but desolation, and the Temple being destroyed, the Covenant of God appeared as made void, and thus all hope of salvation had been cut off, yet hope still remained, provided the people sought God in true repentance and faith; and he thus proceeded in the course of his calling, and made it evident that his doctrine would not be without benefit.

He indeed bewails, as I have said, the extreme calamity of his people; but he mingles with his lamentations the doctrine of repentance and faith' For, on the one hand, he shews that the people suffered a just punishment for the many iniquities, of which they could not have been healed; and then, on the other hand, he gives them some intimations of God's mercy, that in death itself the Jews might seek life, nay, that in the lowest depths they might know that God would be propitious to them. He at length by his own example stimulates them to pray; but prayer is founded on faith. It then follows, that Jeremiah, when the people had become wholly alienated from the worship of God, yet spent his labor in collecting together the remnant. Though, then, the whole Church was not only in the greatest

disorder, but also reduced as it were almost to nothing, yet Jeremiah constructed some sort of building out of the ruins. This is the substance of this Book.

The Greek Translators call this Book **Θρήνους**, Lamentations, and very properly, as also the Hebrews call it **קִינּוּת**, *kinut*; though the common name or title is **אֵכָה**, *aike*, from the first word in it. But when they wish to express what the Book contains, they call it **קִינּוּת**, *kinut*, Lamentations.

Let us now proceed to the words; for what I have now briefly touched upon, can be more fully explained as we go on.

CHAPTER 1

LECTURE FIRST.

<250101> **Lamentations 1:1**

1. How doth the city sit solitary
that was full of people! How is
she become as a widow! She *that*
was great among the nations, *and*
princess among the provinces,
how is she become tributary!

1. Quomodo sedet solitaria
civitas, quae abundavit populo!
facta est tanquam vidua, quae
magna fuit in gentibus! Quae
dominata est in provinciis,
redacta est ad tributum!

The Prophet could not sufficiently express the greatness of the calamity, except by expressing his astonishment. He then assumes the person of one who on seeing something new and unexpected is filled with amazement. It was indeed a thing incredible; for as it was a place chosen for God to dwell in, and as the city Jerusalem was not only the royal throne of God, but also as it were his earthly sanctuary, the city might have been thought exempted from all danger. Since it had been said,

“Here is my rest for ever, here will I dwell,”
(<19D214> Psalm 132:14,)

God seemed to have raised that city above the clouds, and to have rendered it free from all earthly changes. We indeed know that there is nothing fixed and certain in the world, and that the greatest empires have been reduced to nothing; but, the state of Jerusalem did not depend on human protection, nor on the extent of its dominion, nor on the abundance of men, nor on any other defenses whatever, but it was founded by a celestial decree, by the promise of God, which is not subject to any mutations. When, therefore, the city fell, uprooted from its foundations, so that nothing remained, when the Temple was disgracefully plundered and then burnt by enemies, and further, when the king was driven into exile, his children slain in his presence, and also the princes, and when the people were scattered here

and there, exposed to every contumely and reproach, was it not, a horrible and monstrous thing?

It was not, then, without reason that the Prophet exclaimed, *How!* for no one could have ever thought that such a thing would have happened; and then, after the event, no one with a calm mind could have looked on such a spectacle, for innumerable temptations must have come to their minds; and this thought especially must have upset the faith of all — "What does God mean? How is it that, he has promised that this city would be perpetual? and now there is no appearance of a city, and no hope of restoration in future." As, then, this so sad a spectacle might not only disturb pious minds, but also upset them and sink them in the depths of despair, the Prophet exclaims, *How!* and then says, *How sits the city solitary*, which had much people! Here, by a comparison, he amplifies the indignity of the fact; for, on the one hand, he refers to the flourishing state of Jerusalem before the calamity, and, on the other hand, he shews how the place had in a manner been turned into darkness. For this change, as I have said, was as though the sun had fallen from heaven; for the sun has no firmer standing in heaven than Jerusalem had on earth, since its preservation was connected with the eternal truth of God. He then says that this city had many people, but that now it was sitting *solitary*. The verb to sit, is taken in Hebrew in a good and in a bad sense. Kings are said to sit on their thrones; but to sit means sometimes to lie prostrate, as we have before seen in many places. Then he says that Jerusalem was lying solitary, because it was desolate and forsaken, though it had before a vast number of people.

He adds, *How is she become*, etc.; for the word *how*, אִכֶּה, *aikē*, ought to be repeated, and applied to both clauses. *How*, then, *is she become as a widow, who was great among the nations!*^{F1} He says that Jerusalem had not only been full of citizens, but had also extended its power through many nations; for it is well known that many contiguous nations were tributary to it under David and Solomon. And to the same purpose is what follows, *She who ruled among provinces is become tributary!* that is, is become subject to a tribute. This phrase is taken from <052801> Deuteronomy 28, for the prophets were wont freely to borrow expressions from Moses, that chief teacher and prophet, as we shall presently see again.

We now then see the meaning of the Prophet. He wonders at the destruction of the city Jerusalem, and regarded it as a prodigy, which not only disturbed the minds of men, but in a manner confounded them. And by this mode of speaking he shews something of human infirmity; for they must be void of all feeling who are not seized with amazement at such a mournful sight. The Prophet then spoke not only according to his own feelings, but also according to those of all others; and he deplored that calamity as it were in the person of all. But he will hereafter apply a remedy to this astonishment For when we thus exaggerate evils, we at the same time sharpen our grief; and thus it happens that we at length become overwhelmed with despair; and despair kindles rage, so that men clamor against God. But the Prophet so mourned, and was in such a way amazed, that he did not yet indulge his grief nor cherish his amazement; but as we shall see, he restrained himself, lest the excess of his feelings should carry him beyond due bounds. It then follows, —

<div><250102> Lamentations 1:2</div>	
2. She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears <i>are</i> on her cheeks; among all her lovers she hath none to comfort <i>her</i> : all her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they are become her enemies.	2. Plorando ploravit noctu, et lachrymae ejus super genas ejus, non est ei consolator ex omnibus amicis ejus, et omnes socii ejus Perfide egerunt cum ea, fuerunt illi inimici.

Jeremiah still pursues the same subject, for he could not have spoken briefly and in a few words of things so bitter and mournful; and he seems to have felt deeply the ruin of his own country. And when we wish to penetrate into the hearts of those whose sorrow we desire to alleviate, it is necessary that they should understand that we sympathize with them. For when any one stronger than another seeks to mitigate another’s grief, he will be disregarded if what he adduces seems to proceed from an unfeeling barbarity. Had, then, Jeremiah spoken as it were in contempt., he could have hardly hoped for any fruit from his teaching, for the Jews would have thought him void of all human feelings. This, then, is the reason why he bewails, as one of the people, the calamity of the city. He did not, however, dissemble in any degree in the history he related; but we know that God’s servants, while they speak in earnest, do not yet forget

prudence; for they regard in this respect what is useful; and their doctrine ought in a manner to be so regulated as to produce effect on the hearers.

He then says that the weeping of Jerusalem was continual; for he says first, *Weeping she wept*, and then, *in the night*; by which words he means that there was no intermission. For the night is given us for rest, and God intends some relaxation to men by the interchange of nights and days.

When, therefore, the Prophet says that Jerusalem, *weeping, wept in the night*, he intimates that her sorrow, as I have stated, was continual. Then he adds, *her tears are on her cheeks*. Some render it jaws, but improperly; the word לַחִי, *lachi*, indeed means a jaw, but it is to be taken for cheeks, or cheek-bones. Then he means that tears were so profuse as to wet the whole face. It is possible in weeping to restrain tears; but when they flow over the whole face and cover the cheeks, it is an evidence of great mourning. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet says that tears were on her cheeks; for he wished to shew that tears were profusely shed.

He says further, *She has no comforter*. And this circumstance ought to be noticed, for nothing is more seasonable in grief than to have friends near us to shew us kindness, to be partakers of sorrow, and to apply the consolations which may be had. But when no one feels for us in our evils, our sorrow is much more increased. The Prophet then says that there was no one seeking to soothe the griefs of Jerusalem. He adds, *of all thy friends*. Had Jerusalem been always forsaken, she could have borne it better when no comforter was present. For we see that miserable men are not thus soft and tender when very grievous calamities happen to them; they do not look here and there for friends to come to them, and why? because they have always been disregarded. It is, then, nothing new to them, even in the greatest adversities, to have no one to shew them any tokens of kindness. But when they who have had many friends, and thought that they would be always ready to bring them aid — when they see themselves forsaken, their sorrow becomes much more grievous. This, then, is what the Prophet means in saying, that of many friends there were none to comfort Jerusalem in her miseries.

There is not yet a doubt but that he indirectly reprov'd Jerusalem; and by אֲהָבִים, *aebim*, he understood *lovers*, as we have seen in other places; for as they thought themselves safe by means of ungodly treaties, the prophets say that they were like harlots who everywhere prostitute

themselves and make gain by their lasciviousness, and allure lovers on every side. It was, therefore, right of the Prophet to remind the Jews in this place of that wickedness, even that they had conciliated at one time the Egyptians, at another, the Assyrians, like an impudent woman, who is not satisfied with her own husband, but draws lovers from all quarters. However this may be, he no doubt understands by *friends* those who confederated with them; and who were these? even those with whom the Jews had connected themselves, having disregarded God; for they had been sufficiently warned by the prophets not to form connections with the heathens. But, at the same time, Jeremiah sets forth the atrocity of the thing by saying that there was none of all her friends a comforter to Jerusalem, because all her friends had acted perfidiously. It follows, —

<250103>Lamentations 1:3	
3. Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude; she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits.	3. Migravit (<i>tanquam in exilium</i>) Jehudah prae magnitudine servitutis; ipsa sedet in gentibus, (<i>ad verbum</i> , sedens in gentibus,) non invenit requiem, (<i>vel, in praesenti tempore</i> , non invenit;) omnes apprehensores ejus apprehenderunt eam inter angustias.

Interpreters apply this, but in my view improperly, to the captivity of the people; on the contrary, the Prophet means that the Jews had been scattered and sought refuges when oppressed, as they were often, by the tyranny of their enemies, and then by degrees he advances to their exile; for he could not have said all things at the same time. Let, then, the order in which he speaks be observed: before he bewails their exile, he says that Judah had been scattered; for many, fleeing the cruelty of enemies, went into voluntary exile. We have before seen that many concealed themselves with the Moabites; nor is there a doubt but that many went into Egypt: in short, there was no country in which some of the Jews were not fugitives.

The real meaning, then, of the Prophet here is, that the Jews had migrated, that is, had left their own country and fled to other countries, because they were subjected to miseries and cruel servitude.

Some take the words in a passive sense, even that Judah migrated, because they had inhumanly oppressed their servants. But I suspect what has led them astray, they thought that exile is meant here; and then one mistake produces another; for it would have been absurd to say, that the Jews had migrated into exile on account of affliction, and had migrated willingly; for we know that they were violently driven by the Chaldeans. They did not, then, willingly migrate. When these two things could not be connected, they thought that the cruelty of the Jews is what is referred to, which they had exercised towards their own brethren. But the migration of which the Prophet speaks is improperly applied, as I have said, to the captivity; but on the contrary, he means those who had removed into different parts of the world, because this was more tolerable than their condition in their own country. And we hence learn how severely they had been harassed by the Chaldeans, for they had willingly fled away, though, as we know, exile is hard. We then conclude that it was a barbarous and a violent oppression, since the Prophet says, that the Jews thus went into exile of their own accord, and sought hiding-places either in Egypt or in the land of Moab, or among other neighboring nations. ^{F2}

He afterwards adds another evil, that they never found rest; and lastly, that they had been taken by their enemies between straits, so that no escape was possible. It must have been a sad condition for the people to live in a foreign land; for we know that such a precarious life differs but little from death; and there were no contiguous nations by whom the Jews were not hated. When they then fled to such people, it was no small evil. But when they had nowhere a quiet abode, the indignity was still greater, and this is what the Prophet now refers to. But when we flee and tremblingly turn here and there, it is one of the greatest of evils to fall into the hands of enemies, and to be taken by them when we are enclosed as it were between two walls, or in a narrow passage, as some explain the word. It follows, —

4. The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate; her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she *is* in bitterness.

4. Viae Sion lugentes a non venientibus (*ad verbum*; quia non sint qui veniant) ad solennitatem; omnes portae ejus solitariae (vastatae, שׁוֹמֵמִין;) sacerdotes ejus plorantes, virgines ejus afflictæ, et ipsa amaritudo ei (*hoc est*, ipsa in amaritudine, *ut vertit Hieronymus*).

Jeremiah refers here to another cause of sorrow, that the worship of God had ceased, it having been interrupted; nay, it seemed to have become extinct for ever. He then says that the *ways of Sion mourned*, because none came to the feasts. The words are figurative, for we know that feelings belong not to ways; but the Prophet ascribes feeling to what is inanimate. And this sort of personification is more emphatical than if he had introduced the people as mourning. But when the Jews saw that God's worship had fallen, it was more grievous than to find themselves bereaved of children or of wives, or plundered of all their goods; for the more precious God's worship was to them, and the more religion was thought of, in which consisted the eternal salvation of their souls, the more severe and mournful was it to see the Church, so scattered, that God could no longer be worshipped and invoked.

It is indeed true that God's worship was not tied to ceremonies; for Daniel never ceased to pray, and he was heard .no less in his exile than if he came to the sacrifices with great solemnity to make an offering in the Temple. This is no doubt true; but as God had not in vain instituted these duties and rites of religion, the Prophet exhibits the thing itself by its symbols. As, then, feasts were testimonies of God's grace, it was the same as though the Jews were called together by a standard being lifted up, and as though God appeared in the midst of them. Hence the Prophet, referring to these external symbols, shews that the worship of God had in a manner ceased.

Her gates are solitary, or desolate; *her priests are in mourning, her virgins in afflictions; she is in bitterness.* ^{F3} Now this passage reminds us, that when God afflicts his Church, however grievous it may be to see innocent

men slain, blood shed promiscuously, the sexes, men and women, killed indiscriminately; and though it be a sad spectacle to see houses robbed and plundered, fields laid waste, and al! things in a confusion, yet when all these things are compared with the abolition of God's worship, this passage reminds us that all these things ought to appear light to us. Though David greatly deplored his condition, because he was banished from the Temple, and did not as usual lead thither the assembly, when he was not the only one ejected from the sanctuary of God; yet when the sanctuary itself was destroyed, together with the altar, when there were no sacrifices, no thanksgiving, no praises; in short, no prayer, it was surely much more bitter.

This lamentation of the Prophet ought then to be carefully noticed, when he says, that *the ways of Sion mourned*, that no one went up *to the feasts*. What follows I pass over; I shall hereafter dwell more on these things when we advance towards the end of the narrative.

<250105> **Lamentations 1:5**

5. Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper; for the Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children re gone into captivity before

5. Fuerunt inimici ejus in caput; hostes ejus feliciter egerunt (fuerunt in pace, שָׁלוֹם;) quia Jehova afflixit eam super magnitudine scelerum, ejus; parvuli ejus the enemy. Profecti sunt in exilium coram adversario.

He first says that her enemies *had become the head*; and by this expression he doubtless means power; and this way of speaking he borrowed from Moses, for these are his words,

“Thou shalt be the head and not the tail,
in a high place, not obscure.” (<052813> Deuteronomy 28:13.)

He then says, that *enemies were the head*, that is, ruled over them. And the opposite of that is to be understood, even that they had become the tail, that is, were under the feet as it were of their enemies. And he says that her enemies had *acted successfully*, even *because Jehovah had afflicted her*. He here laments after the common practice, as ungodly men are wont to do; but he mixes instruction with his mourning, and shews that God, in a

state of things so turbulent and confused, appeared as a righteous judge. He then recalled them to the consideration of God's hand, when he said that her enemies had acted successfully, because God had *afflicted her*. Jerome renders the words, "because Jehovah hath spoken." He derives the verb from **אָגַד**, *ege*, which means to speak or to meditate. But this is an evident mistake, as we shall find another presently in this very chapter. There is no doubt but that the Prophet intimates that the cause of all evils was, that God had afflicted her, even on account of the greatness of her impieties, or of her sins. He now then begins to shew that there is no reason why the Jews should be swallowed up with grief and despair, if only they considered whence their evils proceeded. He thus begins to call their attention to God's judgment. This indeed of itself would not have been sufficient; but he afterwards points out a fruitful source of consolation. But we shall see these things mentioned in their due order.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as the deformity of thy Church at this day is sufficient to dishearten us all, we may learn to look to thine hand, and know that the reward of our sins is rendered to us, and that we may not doubt but that thou wilt be our physician to heal our wound, provided we flee to thy mercy; and do thou so retain us in the assurance of thy goodness and paternal care, that we may not hesitate, even in extreme evils, to call on thee in the name of thine only-begotten Son, until we shall find by experience that never in vain are the prayers of those, who, relying on thy promises, patiently look for a remedy from thee alone, even in extreme evils, and also in death itself. — Amen.

LECTURE SECOND

We began yesterday to explain the passage where the Prophet says, that the enemies of Jerusalem had become *the head* and had *been successful*. It was a trial which must have grievously assailed the minds of the faithful, when they saw their enemies having fortune, as they commonly say, as it were in their own hand; for it appeared as though God shewed himself favorable to them. Hence the Prophet assigns the reason, lest the faithful should fall off from religion and the fear of God, and says that the whole of this proceeded from the just vengeance of God, it being his purpose to afflict his own Church; and he states not this alone, but adds, *on account of the greatness of her iniquities*. For ungodly men sometimes acknowledge that they have to do with God, but yet they murmur and think that God is unjust and cruel. Hence the Prophet not only taught the Jews that God was the author of the calamities which had happened, but at the same time reminded them that they were worthy of such a reward, not only because they had transgressed, but because they had added sins to sins; for this is what he means by *the greatness of iniquities*. But he will presently repeat this sentence and enlarge upon it: it is then enough now to state his object. It was for this cause, then, as he says, that *her little ones went into captivity before the adversary*.

It was, indeed, an indignity, calculated to embitter the minds of the faithful, to see not only their young men but also infants so cruelly treated. :For men always think that they have some just cause to contend with God, and especially when the case of infants is brought forward; who, then, is not disposed to say that God's vengeance exceeds its due limits? "If his purpose be," say they, "to punish men for their wickedness, why does he not restrain his wrath as to the innocent? for how have miserable infants sinned?" But the Prophet here checks such audacity, and says that God had just reasons for extending his vengeance even to the little ones.^{F4} It now follows, —

<250106> **Lamentations 1:6**

6. And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed: her princes are become like harts that find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer.

6. Et egressus est a filia Sion omnis decor ejus; fuerunt principes ejus tanquam cervi qui non inveniunt pascuum: et profecti sunt abaque Virtute coram persecutore.

He continues the same subject. He says here that the daughter of Sion was denuded of all her ornaments. Now, we know what was the honor or dignity of that people; for Moses, in order to set forth the greatness of God's grace, exclaims,

“What nation so illustrious under heaven !”
(<050407> Deuteronomy 4:7.)

As, then, the singular gifts of God had been conferred on that people, it was a very sad spectacle to see that city, which once possessed the highest glory, robbed of all its honor and covered with disgrace, as we shall hereafter see. He then says that all her *glory* was taken away from the daughter of Sion.

Now, there is no need to enumerate all the kinds of honor or glory which belonged to the city Jerusalem. But it may be said first, that God had chosen there a habitation for himself; and then a sacerdotal kingdom was there, — the people were holy to God — they were his heritage, — there God had deposited his covenant, — he deemed all the Jews his children, and his will was that they should in return count him as their Father. As, then, they had been enriched with so many ornaments and so superior, it is no wonder that the Prophet deplored the state of the city when stripped of all its glory.

He then adds, that *her princes were like famished harts* for harts, as they are by nature swift, when pressed by want run as though they were flying. Since then the swiftness of that animal is so great, the Prophet says that the princes, who were wont to walk with so much gravity and to carry the appearance of great authority, had become swift, like harts oppressed with hunger; for they also labored under the want of everything.^{F5} He adds that at length they *went away*, that is, they fled *before their pursuers without*

strength. He intimates by these words that they dared not to contend with their enemies, but that they were so frightened that they fled, and thus proved that they were wholly disheartened and lifeless. It follows, —

<250107> Lamentations 1:7	
7. Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction, and of her miseries, all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her: the adversaries saw her, and did mock at her sabbaths.	7. Recordata est Jerusalem diebus afflictionis suae et penuriae suae, omnium desiderabilium suorum quae fuerunt a diebus antiquis, cum caderet populus ejus in manu hostis et nullus auxiliator ei: viderunt hostes, subsannarunt (vel, riserunt) super sabbatio (vel, cessatione) ejus.

He confirms the former verse when he says, that *Jerusalem remembered her desirable things* when she was afflicted by God’s hand, and reduced to extreme want. And he in-intimates by these words, that when Jerusalem was in its splendor, it did not sufficiently consider the blessings of God; for the despisers of God cram themselves with whatever flows from his bounty, and yet do not acknowledge him; for ingratitude is like an abyss which absorbs all the fullness of God’s blessings. Then the Prophet intimates that when Jerusalem flourished in wealth and in abundance of all things, when it was adorned with singular gifts, she became as it were inebriated, and never considered as she ought to have done, the benefits which God had bestowed on her. And now, when she was reduced to want and surrounded with extreme miseries, *she remembered her desirable things*, even the glory before mentioned; for by desirable things he means those gifts in which Jerusalem excelled as long as God manifested himself as a bountiful Father towards it.

I wonder how all have given this version, “Jerusalem remembered the days,” etc. Some rightly explain the passage, but all agree in giving a wrong version. But the meaning is sufficiently evident, *Jerusalem remembered her desirable things in the days of her affliction and of her want*, or of her groaning, or of her transmigration; for some derive the word from רָדָה, *rud*, which means to complain, or to migrate. Hence they render it “exile,” or migration. But others render it “complaint.” Others, again, derive it from

מרד, *mered*, which sometimes means to fail, and render it “want,” or indigence. Why some have translated it “iniquities” I know not, and there is no reason for such a version. I do not approve of “complaint;” exile or want is the best word. ^{F6}

The days of affliction he more clearly expresses, when he says, *When the people fell into the hand of the enemy, and there was no helper*. We now see what the Prophet means, even that Jerusalem was as it were roused from her lethargy when God afflicted her. For as the drunken, after being satiated, so sleep in their excess that they know and feel nothing, but seem half dead; so prosperity inebriated Jerusalem for a long time; but being at length awakened, she perceived whence she had fallen. As long, then, as she stood in her high place of honor, she did not consider God’s indulgence towards her; but after she was stripped of all her blessings, and became deeply afflicted, she then remembered her *desirable things*, that is, she at length began to perceive what she had lost, because she had fallen from the grace of God.

We may hence gather a useful doctrine; for what the Prophet relates of Jerusalem is seen almost in all mankind; but we must beware lest this should be true of us. For God has not only in a common manner dealt liberally hitherto with us, but he has also been pleased to favor us with evidences of favor even more than paternal; he has separated us from the unbelieving, and has bestowed on us many of his blessings. Let us now, then, take heed lest we become stupid while God deals liberally with us; but, on the contrary, let us learn to appreciate the blessings of God, and consider the end for which they have been given us, otherwise what is said here of Jerusalem will happen to us; for being too late awakened, we shall know that we were happy when God shewed himself a father to us. We see the same thing exemplified in Adam the first man; for though God adorned him with excellent gifts, yet being not content with his lot, he wished to exalt himself beyond due limits; after he fell and was reduced to extreme want, he then began to know what he had previously been, and what he had become through his fall. (^{<010126>} Genesis 1:26, 27; 3:6,7.) But as this testimony of the Prophet is peculiarly suitable to the Church, let us know that we are warned by the example of Jerusalem, so that when God shews to us his bounty, his gifts ought as they deserve, to be valued, lest when too late we shall at length begin to acknowledge how desirable had been our previous condition. Then, in a word, Jeremiah here reproves the

stupidity of the people, who did not know how desirable was their state, until they were deprived and plundered of all their blessings. He also says, *from the days of old*. By these words he probably intimates that the course of God's kindness had been perpetual; for God had not for a short time been bountiful to that people, but had shewed them favors successively and continually.

When her people fell, etc. It was a heavier misery, because they had so long flourished. It is added, *Seen, her have enemies, they laughed at her Sabbath*, or at her cessation, which I do not dislike. But they who render it "leisure," or idleness, either pervert or too much obscure the meaning of the Prophet. In the word "cessation," there is an irony, for the enemies did not simply laugh at cessation, but did so in mockery, as they took this opportunity to taunt them for their religion. We know that the Sabbaths of the Jews were always hated by the heathens; and they were thereby subjected to many reproaches; for by way of reproach they called the Jews Sabbatharians. And when they wished ignominiously to traduce the whole service of God, as under the law, they named it "Sabbaths." There is, then, no doubt but that the heathens reproachfully taunted the Jews because they observed the Sabbath; "See, now is the time to worship God." And we also see that God upbraided the Jews in a similar way by saying,

"Until the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths." (<032643> Leviticus 26:43.)

For when the Jews had the opportunity and leisure (when no enemies molested them) to observe the worship of God, they contemptuously profaned the Sabbaths. As, then, God's worship had been so disgracefully neglected by them, God said, "The land itself shall in your stead keep the Sabbath;" how? it shall not be ploughed, it shall not bring forth fruit. (<032634> Leviticus 26:34, 35.) That cessation was called by God Sabbath, but not without a taunt; for he cuttingly reprov'd the Jews for having violated the Sabbaths, as was also done by Jeremiah, (<241722> Jeremiah 17:22, 27.)^{F7}

It then appears to me probable that taunts were cast by enemies against the Jews, that they might now have a long and a continual Sabbath, while the city was deserted and no one dwelt there. For it would have been cold and unmeaning to say that the enemies laughed at the cessation of it. The Prophet would have no doubt used a different word, if his purpose had

been to point out the blasphemy of enemies as to God’s worship. *The enemies* then *saw and laughed at her cessation*; but this cessation they called by way of reproach Sabbatharian. It follows, —

<250108> Lamentations 1:8	
8. Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed; all that honored her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness; yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward.	8. Peccatum peccavit Jerusalem (hoc est, scelerate egit;) propterea in migrationem (vel, commotionem) facta est (hoc est, Reddita fuit instabilis;) omnes qui honore eam persequabantur, spreverunt eam, quia viderunt turpitudinem (vel, foeditatem) ejus; etiam ipsa gemens, et conversa est retrorsum.

Here the Prophet expresses more clearly and strongly what he had briefly referred to, even that all the evil which the Jews suffered proceeded from God’s vengeance, and that they were worthy of such a punishment, because they had not lightly offended, but had heaped up for themselves a dreadful judgment, since they had in all manner of ways abandoned themselves to impiety. This is the substance of what is said. We hence learn that the Prophet did not compose this song to lament the calamity of his own country as heathens were wont to do. An example of a heathen lamentation we have in Virgil: —

*“Come is the great day and the unavoidable time
Of Dardania: we Trojans have been; Ilium has been,
And the great glory of the Teuerians: cruel Jupiter has to Argos
Transferred all things: the Danai rule in the burnt city.”^{F8}*

He also repeats the same sentiment in other words: —

*“O country! O Ilium, the house of the gods! and the famous for war,
The camp of the Dardanidans! cruel Jupiter has to Argos
Transferred all things.”^{F9}*

He thus mourns the destruction of Troy; but he complains of the cruelty of God, and calls Him cruel Jupiter, because he was himself enraged, and yet the speaker was Pantheus the priest of Apollo. We hence see how the unbelieving, when they lament their own calamities, vomit forth blasphemies against God, for they are exasperated by sorrow. Very

different is the complaint of the Prophet from that of the ungodly; for when he deplores the miseries of his people, he at the same time adds that God is a righteous avenger. He does not then accuse God of cruelty or of too much rigor, but reminds the people to humble themselves before God and to confess that they justly deserved all their evils.

The unbelieving do indeed sometimes mingle some words, by which they seem to give glory to God; but they are evanescent, for they soon return to their perverseness. They are sometimes moderate, “If thou art turned by any entreaties.” In that case they expostulate with God; as though he were deaf to the prayers of his servants. At length they break out into open blasphemies, —

*“After it seemed good to the gods to subvert the affairs of Asia
And the undeserved nation of Priam.”^{F10} —*

They regarded the nation which had been cut off unworthy of such a punishment; they called it an undeserved nation. Now, then, we perceive what is the difference between the unbelieving and the children of God. For it is common to all to mourn in adversities; but the end of the mourning of the unbelieving is perverseness, which at length breaks out into rage, when they feel their evils, and they do not in the meantime humble themselves before God. But the faithful do not harden themselves in their mourning, but reflect on themselves and examine their own life, and of their own accord prostrate themselves before God, and willingly submit to the sentence of condemnation, and confess that God is just.

We hence now see how the calamity of the Church ought to be lamented by us, even that we are to return to this principle, that God is a just avenger, and does not punish common offenses only, but the greatest sins, and that when he reduces us to extremities, he does so on account of the greatness of our sins, as also Daniel confessed. For it was not in few words that he declared that the people were worthy of exile and of the punishment which they suffered; but he accumulated words,

*We have sinned, we have acted impiously, we have done wickedly,
we have been transgressors.” (<270905> Daniel 9:5.)*

Nor was the Prophet satisfied without this enumeration, for he saw how great the impiety of the people had been, and how mad had been their obstinacy, not for a few years, but for that long time, during which they

had been warned by the prophets, and yet they repented not, but always became worse and worse. Such, then, is the mode of speaking adopted here.

He says that *she was made a commotion*, that is, that she was removed from her country. There seems to be implied a contrast between the rest which had been promised to the Jews, and a wandering and vagrant exile; for, as we have seen, the Jews had not only been banished, but they had nowhere a quiet dwelling; it was even a commotion. This may at the same time be referred to the curse of the law, because they were to be for a commotion — for even the unbelieving shook their heads at them. But the word, נִידָה, *nide*, ought properly to be applied to their exile, when the Jews became unfixed and vagrant.^{F11} It is added, that she was *despised* and treated reproachfully by *all who* before esteemed and *honored* her. This also did not a little increase the grievousness of her calamity; she had been repudiated by her friends, by whom she had before been valued and honored. The reason is mentioned, *because they saw her nakedness*. But the word properly means turpitude or ignominy. It is at length added, that *she even groaned and turned backward*; that is, that she was so oppressed with grief, that there was no hope of a remedy; for to turn backward means the same as to be deprived of all hope of restoration.^{F12} It now follows, —

<250109>Lamentations 1:9	
9. Her filthiness is in her skirts; she remembereth not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully; she had no comfort. O Lord, behold my affliction; for the enemy hath magnified himself.	9. Ignominia ejus in fimbriis ejus, non est recordata finis sui; et descendit mirabiliter, nemo consolator ei; vide, Jehova, afflictionem meam, quia magnifice se effert hostis (ad verbum, magnificatus est hostis.)

He continues here, as I think, the same subject; he had said at the end of the last verse that turpitude or baseness had been seen at Jerusalem; and now he says that it was on the very *fringes* or skirts. The Prophet seems to allude to menstruous women who hide their uncleanness as much as they can; but. such a thing is of no avail, as nature must have its course. In short, the Prophet intimates that the Jews had become filthy in no

common degree, being so afflicted that their uncleanness appeared on their skirts. This seems to be the Prophet's meaning. Interpreters think that Jeremiah speaks of the sins of the people, but they are mistaken; for I doubt not but that the reference is to their punishment. They say that filthiness was on the skirts, because the people had shamelessly prostituted themselves to all kinds of wickedness, and that they remembered not their end, because they had become altogether foolish, according to what is said in the song of Moses,

“O that they were wise, and would foresee their end?
(Deuteronomy 32 29.)

But let any one duly consider the design of the Prophet, and he will readily agree with me that he speaks not of guilt, but on the contrary of punishment.^{F13}

The Prophet then says that the reproach of the Jews was on their skirts, because they could not hide their disgrace, For shame often makes men to hide their evils and silently to bear them, because they are unwilling to expose themselves to the mockery of their enemies. But the Prophet says that the miseries of the people could not be kept hidden, but that they appeared to all, as the case is with women subject to an overflow — it issues forth to the extremities of their garments.

And when he says that *she remembered not her end*, I understand this to mean, that the Jews were so overwhelmed with despair, that they did not raise up their thoughts to God's promises; for it is no ordinary source of comfort, and what even common sense dictates to us, to take breath in extreme evils, and to extend our thoughts farther, for misery will not always oppress us — some change for the better will happen. As then men are wont thus to sustain themselves in adversities, he says that *the Jews remembered not their end*; that is, they were so demented by their sorrow, that they became stupified, and entertained no hope as to the future. In short, by these words, he denotes extreme despair; for the Jews were so stupified that they could not raise up their minds to any hope.

And the reason is expressed, because they had *come down wonderfully*, that is, because they had been cast down in an extraordinary manner. A noun is here put instead of an adverb, and in the masculine gender, **צפלאים** *pelaim*; sometimes we have **פלאות**, *pelaut*, but in the same

sense. He then says that the Jews had sunk as it were miraculously; but by a miracle he means a prodigy, the word being taken in a bad sense; then *miraculously has Jerusalem come down*. It hence followed that it succumbed under its miseries, so that it could not turn its thoughts to any hope, nor think of another end; but. became stupid in its miseries, as men usually become desperate, when they think that there is no deliverance for them. He repeats what he had said before, that *there was no comforter*.

These things ought to be carefully observed, for Satan at this day uses various means to lead us to despair. In order to avert us from all confidence in the grace of God, he sets before us extreme calamities. And when sorrow lays such hold on our minds, that the hope of grace does not shine forth, from that immoderate sorrow arises impatience, which may drive us to madness. Hence it comes that we murmur, and then clamor against God. As, then, at this day Satan supplies materials to harass our minds, that we may succumb under our griefs, let us bear in mind what the Prophet says, that Jerusalem, which was then the only true Church of God in the world, was overwhelmed with so many and so great evils, that she *remembered not her end*. This, indeed, ought to be understood of external circumstances, for God no doubt sustained the minds of the godly, and always so mitigated their grief that they had regard to their end. But the reference is to the people in general, and also to the outward appearance of things, when the Prophet says that the Jews remembered not their end.

He now encourages them to pray, and suggests words to them, for he speaks as in the person of all: *See, Jehovah, my affliction, for the enemy hath highly exalted himself*. Though the Prophet here represents the Church, yet he exhorts them no doubt, according to the obligations of his office, to entertain good hope, and encourages them to pray, for true and earnest prayer cannot be offered without faith; for when the taste of God's grace is lost, it cannot be that we can pray from the heart; and through the promises alone it is that we can have a taste of God's paternal goodness. There is, then, no doubt but that the Prophet here promises a sure deliverance to the Jews, provided they turned to God, and believed and were fully persuaded that he would be their deliverer.

We now, then, see what is the right way of teaching, even that men are to be humbled, and that their just condemnation is to be set before them, and that they are also to be encouraged to entertain hope, and a hand is to be

stretched out to them, that they may pray to God, and not hesitate in extreme evils not only to hope for but even to request aid from him. This is the order observed by the Prophet; we must learn in adversities ever to come down to ourselves, and to acknowledge our guilt; and then when we are sunk deep, we must learn to elevate our minds by faith that thence prayer may arise by which our salvation is to be attained.

One thing has escaped me; the Prophet, in order to obtain favor, says, that enemies had greatly exalted themselves. And this deserves a special notice; for what seems to occasion despair to us, ought, on the contrary, to encourage us to entertain good hope, that is, when enemies are insolent and carry themselves with great arrogance and insult us. The greater, then, is their pride and the less tolerable, with more confidence may we call on God, for the Holy Spirit has not in vain taught us this truth, that God will be propitious to us when enemies thus greatly exalt themselves, that is, when they become beyond measure proud, and immoderately indulge themselves in every kind of contempt. It follows —

<div><250110>Lamentations 1:10</div>	
10. The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: for she hath seen that the heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation.	10. Manum suam extendit hostis ad omnia desiderabilia ejus; quia vidit gentes quum ingresse sunt sanctuarium ipsius, de quibus praeceperas, ne ingrederentur in congregationem tibi (hoc est, quae tibi sacrata est.)

The Prophet again deplores the profanation of all sacred things; and this complaint, as I have said, proceeded from the bitterest sorrow; for though it was a sad thing for the faithful, to lose all their property, to wander in exile and to suffer the want of all things, yet it must have been more grievous to them to see the Temple polluted, and all religion exposed to shame. This calamity, then, the Prophet again deplores, when he says that *enemies had stretched forth their hand against all desirable things*. Now, by desirable things, he does not mean riches, nor anything that belongs to the condition of an earthly and fading life, but those invaluable treasures which God had deposited with the chosen people. The enemy, then, had

extended his hand against the altar, against the table, against the ark of the covenant, against all the sacred vessels.

Then this indignity was increased, *because* Jerusalem *saw the heathens entering into her sanctuary*; for the pronoun is in the feminine gender. But the sanctuary of Jerusalem was God's Temple for, though properly speaking, it was alone God's sanctuary, it was yet at the same time the sanctuary of the people, because God had not caused the Temple to be built for his own benefit, but rather for the benefit of his people. What God, then, had consecrated for himself is rightly called the sanctuary of the people. He still increases the indignity, because God *had forbidden the heathens to enter the sanctuary*; but they had violently rushed in there. They did not, however, enter for the sake of worshipping God, for it was his command to keep them from the holy assembly; but they had by force entered for the purpose of violating the Temple, and also of abolishing the whole worship of God, and of exposing religion to all kinds of mockery. ^{F14}

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as at this day we see thy Church miserably afflicted, we may direct our eyes so as to see our own sins, and so humble ourselves before thy throne, that we may yet cease not to, entertain hope, and in the midst of death wait for life; and may this confidence open our mouth, that we may courageously persevere in calling on thy name, through Christ our Lord. — Amen.

LECTURE THIRD

<250111> Lamentations 1:11

11. All her people sigh,
they seek bread; they have
given their pleasant things
for meat to relieve the soul:
see, O Lord, and consider;
for I am become vile.

11. Totus populus ejus gementes, quae
rentes panem, diderunt desiderabilia
sua (*hoc est*, quicquid habebant
pretiosum) Pro cibo ad revocandum
animam: vide, Jehova, et aspice, quia
facta sum vilis (*aut*, contempta.)

The Prophet here complains that all the citizens of Jerusalem were constantly groaning through want and famine. He first says, that *all were sighing*. The word “people” is collective, and hence he uses the plural number, **נָנְעִימִם**, *nanechim*. Then he says that they were all sighing; but he expresses also the reason, because they were *seeking bread*. To seek bread is indeed common to all; but by this word he intimates extreme want., as though he had said, that they begged their bread. He then compares them to beggars, who go about here and there to seek bread.

He says also, that they *gave the most precious things for meat*, to *recover the soul*. Here he refers more clearly to famine, for he says that in a manner they suffered want. Others render the last clause, “to refresh the soul,” which is not unsuitable. But the Prophet no doubt meant to denote a deficiency as to the support of life, when he said, that they gave whatever precious thing they had to restore their souls, as it were from death to life.

A prayer follows, *See, Jehovah, and look, for I am become vile*. We said yesterday, that the complaints which humbled the faithful, and, at the same time, raised them to a good hope, and also opened the door to prayers, were dictated by the Spirit of God. Otherwise, when men indulge in grief, and torment themselves, they become exasperated; and then to be kindled by this irritation is a kind of madness. The Prophet, therefore, in order to moderate the intensity of sorrow, and the raging of impatience, recalls again the faithful to prayer. And when Jerusalem asks God *to see and to look*, there is an emphasis intended in using the two words; and the reason given does also more fully shew this, because she had become *vile*;

^{F15} so that the Church set nothing else before God, to turn him to mercy, but her own miseries. She did not, then, bring forward her own services, but only deplored her own miseries, in order that she might obtain the favor of God. It follows, —

<250112> Lamentations 1:12	
12. <i>Is it</i> nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted <i>me</i> in the day of his fierce anger.	12. Non ad voc omnes qui transitis per viam? Aspicite et videte, an sit dolor sicut dolor meus, qui factus est mihi, quia affixit me (<i>vel</i> , dolore affecit) Jehova in die excandescientiae irae suae.

The beginning of the verse is variously explained. Some read it interrogatively, “Is it nothing to you who pass by the way?” Others more simply, “I see that I am not cared for by you; to you my sorrow is nothing.” Some again read thus, “Let it not be a sorrow to you;” and others, “Let not sorrow be upon you,” that is, let not what I have happen to you; so that it is a prayer expressive of benevolence.

What I prefer is the interrogation, *Is it nothing to you who pass by the way?* for the letter , 𐤅, *He*, the note of a question, is often omitted. But were it read affirmatively, the meaning would not be unsuitable: “It does not concern you who pass by,” as though Jerusalem, in its lamentations, felt grieved that all those who passed by were not touched either with pity or with sorrow. ^{F16}

But she addressed those who *passed by*, that she might more fully set forth the greatness of her calamity. For, had she directed her words to neighbors alone, there would not have been so much force in them; but when she spoke to strangers, she thus shewed that her calamity was so great, that it ought to have roused the sympathy of men from the remotest parts, even while on their journey. And she asks them to *look* and *see*. The order is inverted, for she said before, “See, Jehovah, and look.” Then Jerusalem asked God, first to turn his eyes to see her calamities, and then attentively to notice them: but now for another purpose she says, *look ye and see*, that is, consider how evident is my calamity, which otherwise

might have been in a measure hidden from you. *Look ye*, she says, *is there a sorrow like my sorrow?* she adds, *which is come to me*: some render the words actively, “which Jehovah has brought on me;” but the other version is more correct, for it is more literal. Jerome’s rendering is, “who has gleaned me;” and **צעלל** *olal*, means sometimes to glean, nor do I wish to reject this interpretation. But what follows is incorrectly rendered, as in a former instance, by Jerome, “of which Jehovah has spoken:” for he derived the verb, as before stated, from **הגה**, *ege*; but it comes from **יגה**, *ige*, as it is evident from the letter **ו**, *vau*, being inserted. There is then no doubt but that the Church intimates that God was the author of that sorrow which she deplored.

And it is necessary to know this, lest men should be carried away into excesses in their mourning, as it frequently happens. For the majesty of God imposes a check, when we perceive that we have to do with him. Simple and bare knowledge of this is not, indeed, sufficient, for, as it has been said, the ungodly, while they know that their sorrows proceed from God, yet murmur against him: but it is nevertheless the beginning of patience and meekness when we have a regard to God. It was, then, for this reason that Jerusalem said that she had been afflicted by God.

And it is added, *In the day of the indignation of his wrath*. Here the Prophet wished to express the grievousness of God’s vengeance, by mentioning *the indignation of wrath*. Some render **חרון**, *cherun*, “fury;” but as the word “fury” is too harsh, the word “indignation,” or great heat (*excandescencia*) is not unsuitable. We must, however, bear in mind the design of the Prophet, which was to shew that God’s vengeance had been so dreadful, as though his wrath had all been on a flame against Jerusalem: and this is more fully confirmed in the following verse, —

13. From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet; he hath turned me back; he hath made desolate and faint all the day.

13. E sublimi misit ignem in ossa mea, et dominatus est in ipso (est mutatio numeri, refertur quidem ad oss, sed perinde est ac Si diceret, dominatus est ignis in unoquoque ossium;) extendit rete suum pedibus meis, convertet me retrorsum; dedit me (reddidit me, vel, posuit) vastam vel, desolatam) toto die dolentem (vel, infirmam.)

The Prophet proceeds with the same subject, that God's vengeance had raged most dreadfully against Jerusalem. But employing a metaphor she says, that *fire* had been sent to her *bones*. They who interpret bones of fortified places, weaken the meaning of the Prophet. I take bones in their proper sense, ss though it was said, that God's fire had penetrated into the inmost parts. This way of speaking often occurs in Scripture. By bones is denoted strength or valor. Hence David sometimes deplored, that his bones were vexed or troubled. (<190602> Psalm 6:2.) And Hezekiah said in his song

“As a lion he hath broken my bones.” (<233713> Isaiah 37:13.)

In the same sense the Prophet now says, that *fire* had been *sent by God, which ruled in his bones*, that is, which not only burnt the skin and the flesh, but also consumed the bones. קָבַד, *rede*, means also to take away or to receive: but as the former rendering is most commonly taken, I am disposed to follow it — that *fire ruled in his bones*.

There is another similitude added, that God had *spread a net before her feet*; and thus he had taken away every means of escape. She intimates (for it is Jerusalem who speaks) that she had been ensnared by God's judgments, so that she was bound over to ruin, as though she had fallen into toils or snares. It is stated in the third place, that she was *desolate all the day, so that she sorrowed perpetually*. By all the day is meant continually. It is then said, that she sorrowed without end, beyond measure, because she had been turned back by the nets of God, and her bones had been consumed by celestial fire: for the expression *from above*, מִמְרוֹם, *memerumn*, is emphatical, for the Prophet means that it was no common or human burning; because what is ascribed to God exceeds what

is human or earthly. It is, then, as though he had said, that it had been such a vengeance as betokened the dreadful power of God; for it was the same as though God had thundered from heaven. We now perceive the import of the words. It follows, —

<div><250114> Lamentations 1:14</div>	
14. The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand; they are wreathed and come up upon my neck: he hath made my strength to fall; the Lord hath delivered me into <i>their</i> hands, <i>from</i> whom I am not able to rise up.	14. Ligatumes (<i>hic vertit Hieronymus, vigilavit, namhallucinatus est in puncto duntaxat צנשקד</i> et legendum est צנשקד quia est punctum sinistrum, quod significat ligave, ligatum est igitur) jugum iniquitatum mearum in manu ejus; implicitae sunt (<i>vel, perplexae,</i>) ascenderunt super collum meum; corrui fecit (<i>vel, debilitavit</i>) robur meum; dedit me Dominus in manus eorum (<i>est in regimine, et tamen nulla sequitur additio, quae respondeat, sed apparet aliquid esse subaudiendum, in manus ergo hostium</i>) ex quibus non potero surgere.

Here, again, Jerusalem confesses that God had been justly displeased. She had ascribed to God’s vengeance the evils which she suffered; but now she expresses the cause of that displeasure or wrath. Hence she says, that the *yoke* of her *iniquities* had been *bound* in God’s hand. Though interpreters explain the words, yet they touch not the meaning of the Prophet; for they consider not that there is a continued metaphor. We ought then to bear in mind the two clauses, — that God’s hand held the yoke tied, and also that the yoke was bound around the neck of Jerusalem. As when a husbandman, after having tied a yoke to oxen, holds a rein, and folds it rotund his hand, so that the oxen not only cannot throw off the yoke, but must also obey the hand which holds the reins; so also it is said, that the yoke of iniquities was fastened: “I bear the yoke,” she says, “but it is tied, and so fastened, that it cannot be shaken off; and then, however furious I may be, or kick, God holds the tied yoke by his own hand so as to constrain me to bear it.”

We now, then, see the design and import of the Prophet’s words, that God was justly incensed against Jerusalem, and had justly used so much

severity. Expressed at the same time is the atrocity of the punishment, though wholly just; for, on the one hand, Jerusalem complains that a yoke was laid on her neck, tied and fastened, and also that it was tied by the hand of God, as though she had said, that she was under such a constraint, that there was no relaxation. On the one hand, then, she bewails the grievousness of her calamity; and on the other, she confesses that she fully deserved what she suffered; and thus she accused herself, lest any should think that he clamored against God, as is commonly the case in sorrow. ^{F17}

It is added, *He hath made to fall*, or weakened, etc. The verb כָּשַׁל, *cashel*, in *Hilphil*, means, as it is well known, to stumble, or to cause to stumble or fall. *He hath*, then, *weakened my strength; the Lord hath given me up into the hand* of my enemies, from whom *I shall not be able to rise*; that is, he hath so subjugated me, and so laid me prostrate under the hands of my enemies, that there is no hope of rising again. Were any one to ask, “Why then does she pray, and again will pray often?” the answer is, that when she says here, that she will not be able to rise again, the reference is made to the outward state of things: in the meantime, the grace of God is not taken to the account. and this goes beyond all human means. She then says, that according, to the thoughts of the flesh, she had no hope, because there appeared to be no means of rising. But yet she did not despair, but that God would at length, by His almighty power, cause her to rise from fatal ruin. And this is a mode of speaking that ought to be borne in mind; for hope sees things which are hidden. But at the same time the faithful speak according to the common appearance of things, and when they seem to despair, they regard what falls under their own observation and judgment. So then Jerusalem now says that she could not rise, except God manifested his extraordinary power, which far exceeds all human means. It follows, —

15. The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty men in the midst of me; he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men: the Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, as in a winepress.

15. Calcavit omnes fortes meos Dominus in medio mei; vocavit super me diem (hoc est, edixit statum diem, alii vertunt congregationem; *et מועד*, tam coetum ipsum significat, quam conductum tempus,) ad conterendos adolescentes meos (vel, electos;) torcular calcavit Adonai super virginem (vel, puellam,) filiam Jehudah.

She first says, that *all* her *valiant* men had been *trodden underfoot*. Now we know how much the Jews trusted in their men even to the very time when they were wholly subdued. As then they had shewed so much insolence and pride towards the prophets, it hence became a cause of greater sorrow, when Jerusalem herself saw that she was destitute of every protection, and that her valiant men were trodden under foot. She says, *in the midst of me*. And this ought to be observed; for if they had fallen on the field of battle, if they had been taken in the fields by their enemies, such a thing would not have been so grievous: but that they had been thus laid prostrate, in the very bosom of the city, was indeed a token of vengeance from above. We now see that this circumstance was not superfluous, that all the valiant men of Jerusalem were laid prostrate in *the midst* of her.

It is then said that it was the *fixed time*, when God *destroyed her chosen men*, or her youth. Should it seem preferable to take *מועד*, *muod*, as meaning a congregation, I do not object; yet I do not approve of this meaning, for it seems forced. It agrees better with the context to regard it as the fixed time, the time before appointed by God to destroy all the strong men. ^{F18}

There is then another metaphor used, — that God had *trodden the winepress as to the daughter of Zion*. This figure occurs elsewhere, as in <236301> Isaiah 63:1,

“Who is this that cometh from Edom? and why are his garments red?”

For the Prophet wonders how God could come forth from Edom, sprinkled with blood. God answers, “The winepress have I trod alone;” that is, because he had avenged the wrongs done to his people. For we know that the Idumeans had always been incensed against the miserable Jews. Then God, in order to shew that he was the defender of his Church, says that he came from Edom, and was sprinkled and even made wet with blood. As when any one is red with wine after having toiled in the winepress, so also is the representation in this place. We have also seen in <245133> Jeremiah 51:33, that Babylon was like a threshing-floor. The metaphor, indeed, is different, but bears a likeness to the present. As, then, God is said to tread, or to thresh, when he afflicts any land, so he is said to tread the winepress, as here. ^{F19} It follows, —

<250116> Lamentations 1:16	
16. For these things I weep: mine eye, runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me; my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed.	16. Propter id ego plorans, oculus meus, oculus meus, descendunt aquae, (<i>hoc est</i> , defluit in aquas,) quia remotus est a me consolator, qui animam revocet, (<i>vel</i> , recreat animam, מְשִׁיב;) Fuerunt filii mei desolati, quia praevaluit hostis.

He describes at large the calamities of Jerusalem. But it is no wonder that the Prophet, thus lengthened his discourse; for we know that those who are heavily oppressed never satisfy themselves with mourning and lamentations. If, indeed, we duly consider how great the evils were, the Prophet will not appear to us wordy, nor will his prolixity be wearisome to us. For when any one compares the flourishing state of Jerusalem with that desolate ruin which the Prophet laments, it will surely appear to him that no words, however many, can fully express what it really was; nay, though the expressions may seem hyperbolical, yet they do not exceed the greatness of that calamity. This point is briefly adverted to, lest any one should be wearied with those various modes of expression which the Prophet employs, when yet he might have at once said that Jerusalem was destroyed.

He says, *For this will I weep*. He throughout sustains the person of a woman; for Jerusalem herself speaks, and not Jeremiah. *I*, she says, *for this will weep; mine eye mine eye! it shall descend into waters*. Others read, “Waters will descend from mine eyes;” but such a rendering is too loose. I do not, then, doubt but that Jerusalem says that her eyes would be like fountains of waters. She indeed speaks in the singular number, and repeats the words, *mine eye! mine eye! it shall descend*, or flow as waters, that is, as though they were two fountains, *because alienated from me*, or far from me, *is a comforter, to revive my soul*.^{F20} By these words she intimates that she was fainting, and as it were dying and that there was no one present to administer comfort, so that her soul might be revived. As it appeared before, that it is deemed an extreme evil when there is no friend to do the duty of humanity by alleviating sorrow; so now again Jerusalem repeats the same complaint, and says that all her *sons were destroyed, because the enemy had prevailed*. It follows, —

<div><250117>Lamentations 1:17</div>	
<p>17. Zion spreadeth forth her hands, <i>and there is none to comfort her</i>; the Lord hath commanded concerning Jacob, <i>that his adversaries should be round about him</i>: Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them.</p>	<p>17. Expandit Sion in manibus suis (<i>id est, manus suas, vel, composuit manibus suis, alii vertunt, confregit,</i>) nullus consolator ei; mandavit Jehova super Jacob per circuitus ejus adversarios ejus; facta est Jerusalem in abominationem inter ipsos (<i>vel, tanquam immunda, vel, menstruata, נדה, enim vocater mulier menstruata apud Moseu.</i>)</p>

The Prophet first says that *Jerusalem had expanded her hands*, as a token of sorrow, or that she might seek friends from every side; for when we wish to move men to pity, we stretch forth our arms. I wonder how it came to the minds of some to say that Jerusalem had broken bread with her hands. This is extremely puerile. Some have rendered the words, that she had broken with her hands, understanding thereby that she had clapped with her hands. It is, however, a harsh mode of speaking; I retain the most suitable sense, that *Jerusalem had expanded her hands*. The word פֶּרֶשׁ, *peresh*, means also to disperse, or scatter; but the Prophet no

doubt means the expansion of the hands, as though Jerusalem had said that she was like a woman lamenting her calamities, and seeking friends on every side to give her some consolation. And we may gather the meaning of the Prophet from the passage itself, *Sion*, it is said, *by spreading hands calls her friends, and no one is a comforter*: these clauses ought to be read together, that is, that Sion expanded her hands, and yet no one responded to alleviate her sorrow by consolation.

It follows, that *Jehovah had commanded respecting Jacob, that through his circuits adversaries should afflict him*. The Prophet again reminds us that these evils did not happen through men, but that God had resolved in this manner to punish the obstinate impiety of the people. Lest, then, the Jews should give vent to their sorrow, and ascribe it to the Chaldeans, as it was commonly done, he recalls their attention to God himself, and says that the Chaldeans, however cruel they were, yet did nothing merely through their own impulse, but through God's command. He adds, *through the circuits*, that the Jews might know that there was no escape, for God held them all as though they were shut up. For we can in various ways escape from the hands of men; but when God is our enemy, we in vain seek hiding-places. The Prophet then teaches us that subterfuges did not avail the Jews, because God on every side kept them shut up.

He says at length that *Jerusalem was like a menstruous woman*, or was an abomination; for **נדה**, *nede*, may be rendered uncleanness, or abomination, and is often a noun substantive; and I am disposed so to render it, even that Jerusalem was regarded as filth, as though the Prophet had said that there was no humanity or moderation in the enemies of the Jews, because they were not counted as men, but as offscourings, as an abominable filth.

F21

Now, if such a thing happened to the ancient Church, let us not wonder if at this day also God should deal with us more severely than we wish. It is, indeed, a very bitter thing to see the Church so afflicted as to have the ungodly exulting over its calamities, and that God's children should be as the refuse and filth of the world. But let us patiently bear such a condition; and when we are thus contemptuously treated by our enemies, let us know that God visits us with punishment, and that the wicked do nothing except through the providence of God, for it is his will to try our faith, and thus to shew himself a righteous judge: for if we rightly consider in how many

ways, and how obstinately we have provoked his wrath, we shall not wonder if we also be counted at this day an abomination and a curse. It follows, —

<div><250118> Lamentations 1:18</div>	
18. The Lord is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment: hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity.	18. Justus ipse Jehova, quia os ejus exacerbavi: Audite aedum omnes populi, videte dolorem meum; virgines meae et adolescentes mei profecti sunt in captivitatem.

Jerusalem again acknowledges, and more clearly expresses, that she suffered a just punishment. She had before confessed that her enemies were cruel through God’s command; but it was necessary to point out again the cause of that cruelty, even that she had too long provoked the wrath of God.

She says, first, that God was *just*, or righteous,^{F22} *because she had provoked his mouth*. By the *mouth* of God we are to understand the prophetic doctrine, as it is well known. But the phrase is emphatical, for when the word of God was proclaimed by the mouth of prophets, it was despised as an empty sound. As, then, prophetic doctrine has not its own majesty ascribed to it, God calls whatever his servants declare his mouth. This mode of speaking is taken from Moses, and often occurs in his writings. *Jehovah*, then, *is just*; how so? *because I have provoked his mouth*. And it was more grievous and less excusable to provoke the mouth of God than simply to offend God. The ungodly often offend God when they labor under ignorance; but when the Lord is pleased to open his mouth to recall the erring, and to shew the way of salvation, and then men rush headlong, as it were designedly, into sins, it is certainly a mark of extreme impiety. We hence understand why the Prophet mentions the mouth of God, or the teaching of the prophets, even to exaggerate the wickedness of Jerusalem, which had so obstinately disregarded God speaking by his prophets.

The greatness of her sorrow is again deplored; and what follows is addressed to all nations, *Hear, I pray, all ye people; see my sorrow*. And

what was the reason for this great sorrow? *because*, she says, *my virgins and my young men have been driven into captivity*. This might seem a light thing; for a previous account has been given of other calamities, which were far more severe; and exile in itself is but a moderate punishment. But we must bear in mind what we have before stated, that the Jews dwelt in that land, as though they had been placed there by the hand of God, that Jerusalem was to be a perpetual rest, which had been granted them from above; in short, that it was as it were a pledge of the eternal inheritance. When, therefore, they were driven into captivity, it was the same as though God had cast them down from heaven, and banished them from his kingdom. For the Jews would not have been deprived of that land, had not God rejected them and shewed his alienation from them. It was then the same as repudiation. It is therefore no wonder that Jerusalem so much lamented because her sons and her daughters were driven into exile.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast hitherto dealt so mercifully with us, we may anticipate thy dreadful judgment; and that if thou shouldest more severely chastise us, we may not yet fail, but that being humbled under thy mighty hand, we may flee to thy mercy and cherish this hope in our hearts, that thou wilt be a Father to us, and not hesitate to call continually on thee, until, being freed from all evils, we shall at length be gathered into thy celestial kingdom, which thine only-begotten Son has procured for us by his own blood. — Amen.

LECTURE FOURTH

<250119> Lamentations 1:19

19. I called for my lovers, but they deceived me: my priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city, while they sought their meat to relieve their souls.

19. Clamavi ad amicos nucos, ipsi deceperunt me: sacerdotes mei et seniores mei in urbe obierunt, quia quaesierint cibum sibi et refocillarunt (ad verbum, hoc est, ut refocillarent) animam suam (ad verbum, ut redire facerent, quemadmodum Gallice dicimus, faire revenir le cœur.)

Here the people of God complain in the person of a woman, as we have before seen, that in their calamity they were left destitute of every comfort. And it is a circumstance which increases grief, when no one is present to shew any kindness to the miserable; for it is no small alleviation of sorrow, when friends offer their kind services, and as far as they can, endeavor to mitigate the severity of the evil.

The Church of God now says, that she was so forsaken by friends as to be left alone to pine away in her mourning and sorrow. There may, however, be here an allusion to shameful and impure connections; for by this term, *friends*, the Spirit often points out the Egyptians as well as others in whom the Israelites had foolishly trusted; for in this manner, we know, they had turned aside from conjugal fidelity. God had bound them to himself, that they might acquiesce in his favor alone; and so to acquiesce was their spiritual chastity. Rightly, then, does Scripture compare both the Egyptians and the Assyrians to harlots, whenever the Israelites sought aid from them. But as this explanation seems too refined, I am content to view what is said simply as a complaint., that the people of God, though looking in all directions, yet could find no comfort in the world. *I cried*, she said, *to my friends; they deceived me.*

It is then added, *My priests and mine elders expired in the city.* Had they been slain in battle, it would have been no wonder; for they who go against an enemy, go as it were to meet death. But God's people here deplore a more grievous evil, that the priests died in the city, not through the

enemies' sword, but through famine, which is as it were the extreme of evils. It is then said, that the priests as well as the elders perished through famine, because they could not find food. And when it is said that they *sought food to refresh the soul*, there is a contrast to be understood between ordinary food and a remedy for the famine; for we naturally seek food whenever we feel hungry; but the Prophet refers here to something more than this, even that the priests and the elders sought food, because long abstinence urged them; and it was very sad, that the priests, who excelled in honor, and also the elders, were thus reduced to want. Had such a thing happened to the common people, it would not have been so wonderful; for the long siege of the city had consumed all their provisions. But when the priests, and those who had wealth, were thus oppressed with hunger, we may conclude that the want which the Prophet wished to describe was extreme. It follows, —

<250120> Lamentations 1:20	
20. Behold, O Lord, for I <i>am</i> in distress; my bowels are troubled: mine heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled: abroad the sword bereaveth, at home <i>there is</i> as death.	20. Vide Jehova, quia afflictio mihi, (<i>vel</i> , angustia,) viscera mea conturbata sunt (<i>alii</i> , contracta;) eversum est cor meum interme, quia rebellando rebellavi; fris orbat gladius, domi tanquam mors.

The people turn again to pray God: and what has been before said ought to be remembered, that these lamentations of Jeremiah differ from the complaints of the ungodly; because the faithful first acknowledge that they are justly chastised by God's hand, and secondly, they trust in his mercy and implore his aid. For by these two marks the Church is distinguished from the unbelieving, even by repentance and faith. To sigh and to mourn in adversities, and to lament also their miseries, are common to both; but the children of God differ greatly from the ungodly, because they humble themselves under his mighty hand, and confess that they deserve to suffer punishment; and further, they cast not away the hope of salvation, but implore his mercy. Then the Prophet introduces again the people as praying God to look on them. For the ungodly pour forth their complaints into the air; and when at any time nature dictates to them that they ought to address God, yet no prayer arises from a sincere heart.

There is no doubt but that the Prophet here shewed to the faithful how they were to lament their common miseries, even so as patiently to bear the chastisements of God, and also to seek deliverance from him, though they had provoked his wrath. For when we see that we are pressed down by God's hand, we do not murmur, but the knowledge of our sins humbles us, and faith moderates our mourning, which would otherwise exceed moderation. And when we thus humbly flee to God, we in a manner unburden our sorrows into his bosom, as it is said in the Psalms, "Cast (or roll) on God thy cares." (<195522> Psalm 55:22.)

He then says first, *See, Jehovah, for affliction is to me*. He then expresses the manner of the affliction, *because his bowels were bound*, or troubled. The word is from , **חִמַּר** *chemer*, which is doubled. Some derive it from **חִמּוֹר**, *chemur*, an ass, and so render it "bound," as when a burden is fastened on an ass. But more probable is the opinion of those who derive the word from mortar or cement, for as cement is made by mixing water with lime and sand, and stirring them together, so by a metaphor the bowels are said to be stirred or troubled;^{F23} and this explanation agrees better with what follows — for it is added, *my heart is overturned*. The reason is given, because the people by *rebelling had rebelled*, that is, had been very rebellious against God. We have said that the complaints of the godly differ from those of the ungodly, for they not only pray to God, but make also a sincere confession, so as to make it evident that they are justly chastised by God's hand. At the beginning of the verse the faithful prayed, and now again they declare that they deserved what they suffered, because they had been very rebellious. Then Jeremiah proceeds with what he had begun to say respecting the grievousness of their punishment, *Abroad*, or without, he says, *the sword bereaves, and at home it is like death*; that is, "When we go abroad, the sword meets us; and when we hide ourselves at home, there also many deaths surround us." He uses the particle of likeness, *as*, or *like*; as though he had said that nothing met them at home but what was deadly.^{F24} It now follows, —

21. They have heard that I sigh; there is none to comfort me: all mine enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that thou hast done it; thou wilt bring the day that thou hast called, and they shall be like unto me.

21. Audierunt quod sum gemens, (hoc est, quod sim in luctu,) nec quisquam consolator mihi; omnes inimici mei audierunt malum meum, gavisī sunt quod tu feceris, et adduxeris diem, quem tu vocasti; atqui erunt sicuti ego.

The verb שָׁמְעוּ, *shemou*, is put down twice, but at the beginning without a nominative case: hence the sentence is defective, until in the second clause the word אֵיבִי *aibi*, is expressed. Jeremiah evidently says, that enemies had *heard* of the evils under which the people labored, even that they were *sighing*, and that no one showed them any kindness; for it is commonly the case that sympathy is manifested towards the miserable. By this circumstance he amplifies the grievousness of their punishment, there being no one, as before said, to administer any consolation. But it is repeated, that *enemies* had *heard*; for as there is nothing more bitter than reproaches, we seek in adversities to withdraw ourselves in a manner from the observation of men; but our evil is especially doubled, when we become a spectacle to enemies; for they derive joy from our adversities, and then exult over us. When, therefore, the chosen people said, that *enemies* had *heard*, they thus showed that nothing could be added to their miseries: *They have heard*, then, that I was sighing and that no one comforted me. Who had heard? all mine enemies; and they *have rejoiced that thou hast done it*.

Jeremiah seems to intimate, that their enemies, being fully persuaded that God was displeased with his people, did on this account more freely rejoice; and at the same time they believed that it was all over with those miserable people with whom God was displeased. But I know not whether this view is well grounded. I indeed do not reject it, :nor will I dispute with any one who may hold that the enemies rejoiced, because they thought that God was become the enemy of that people, whom he had before chosen and also protected: nor is this view unsuitable; for the reprobate then fully triumph when they can boast that God is adverse to us. But when no such thought comes to their minds, they yet cease not to rejoice

when they see that we are oppressed and afflicted. Though, then, they may not think of God's hand, yet they rejoice that it is *done*; that is, they rejoice that we are distressed, though they understand not who the author is. We may then take the meaning simply to be, that the enemies of the Church rejoiced at that calamity, without considering who the author of it was.

But, why is it expressed that *God had done it*? even to shew that while the ungodly think that fortune is unfavorable to us, it; is our duty to cast our eyes on God, for we ought not to judge of things according to their blindness. As, then, they ascribe not to God the glory due to him when they do not acknowledge him as judge, it ever behooves us to see by the eyes of faith what is hid from the natural perceptions of men, even that nothing happens to us except through the righteous judgment of God. Though, then, enemies had not wisdom to know how it was that the Church was afflicted, yet it behooved the Church itself to use by means of faith such a language as this, that God had *done* it; *they rejoiced that thou hast done it*.

And it follows, *Thou hast brought the day which thou hast called*, or proclaimed; for **קָרָא**, *kora*, has sometimes this meaning.^{F25} In short, the faithful now confess not only that they were afflicted by God's hand, but also that what the prophets had so often threatened, and what had been despised, was now fulfilled. For we have seen with what pertinacity that people rejected the threatenings given by the prophets: God had often exhorted them to repent, and also had proclaimed or fixed a time for them, but without effect. Therefore the faithful now reflect on what had not been sufficiently known before, even that the day was brought which had been often proclaimed. And thus they confessed, not only that they were worthy of punishment, but that it was the proper time for them to be chastised, as they had not repented after having been so often warned.

He adds, *But they themselves shall be as I am*. Here the future tense may be considered as optative, for presently a prayer follows which confirms this view. But we may also take the meaning to be simply this, — that the faithful began to take courage, as they looked forward to the time when God would render to the wicked according to their proud and disdainful exultation's. It follows, —

22. Let all their wickedness come before thee; and do unto them as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions: for my signs are many, and my heart is faint.

22. Veniet (aut, veniat) omnis malitia eorum in conspectum tuum, et facias illis, quemadmodum fecisti mihi super omnibus sceleribus meis; quia multa suspiria mea, et cor meum debile (vel, moestum.)

Here, no doubt, the faithful regarded as a part of their comfort the judgment which God would at length execute on the ungodly; and there is no doubt but that this kind of imprecation had been suggested to God's children by the Holy Spirit, in order to sustain them when pressed down by heavy troubles; not that God gave them thus loose reins to desire vengeance on their enemies, but that while those perished who indulged their malice, the faithful might derive from their ruin a hope of deliverance; for the vengeance of God on the reprobate brings with it a token of paternal favor towards the elect.

And that we may better understand what this imprecation means, we must first bear in mind that we cannot complain of enemies, except they are also enemies to God. For should I hurt any one, and should he, impelled by wrath, vex me, there could be no access for my complaint to God, and in vain could I seek a covering from this example; why? because whenever we go before God, it is necessary, as I have said, that our enemies should be also his enemies. But, secondly, it would not be sufficient, except our zeal were also pure; for when we defend our own private cause, something excessive will necessarily be in our prayers. Let us, then, know that we are not to pronounce an imprecation on our enemies, except, first, they are God's enemies; and, secondly, except we disregard ourselves, and plead not our own cause, but, on the contrary, undertake the cause of public safety, having laid aside all turbulent feelings; and especially, except our fervor arises from a desire to glorify God. With these qualifications, then, we may adopt the form of prayer given us here by the Prophet. But as this subject has been explained elsewhere, and often and very fully, I touch on it here but briefly.

He then says, *Let all their wickedness come before thee; do to them as thou hast done to me.* Here, again, the faithful take upon themselves the blame for all the evils they were suffering; for they do not expostulate with God, but pray only that he would become the judge of the whole world, in order that the ungodly might also at length have their turn, when God would be pacified towards his children. But they afterwards more clearly express that they had deserved all that they had suffered — *for all my sins.* Then they add, *because my sighs are many and my heart is weak.* We, in short, see that the faithful lay humbly their prayers before God, and at the same time confess that what they had deserved was rendered to them, only they set before God their extreme sorrow, straits, grieves, tears, and sighs. Then the way of pacifying God is, sincerely to confess that we are justly visited by his judgment, and also to lie down as it were confounded, and at the same time to venture to look up to him, and to rely on his mercy with confidence. Now follows the second elegy, —

CHAPTER 2

<250201> Lamentations 2:1

1. How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, *and* cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger!

1. Quomodo obnubilavit in iracundia sua Dominus filiam Sion, projecit a coelo in terram decorem Israel, et non recordatus est scabelli pedum suorum in die iracundiae!

The Prophet again exclaims in wonder, that an incredible thing had happened, which was like a prodigy; for at the first sight it seemed very unreasonable, that a people whom God had not only received into favor, but with whom he had made a perpetual covenant, should thus be forsaken by him. For though men were a hundred times perfidious, yet God never changes, but remains unchangeable in his faithfulness; and we know that his covenant was not made to depend on the merits of men. Whatsoever, then, the people might be, yet it behooved God to continue in his purpose, and not to annul the promise made to Abraham. Now, when Jerusalem was reduced to desolation, there was as it were all abolition of God's covenant. There is, then, no wonder that the Prophet here exclaims, as on account of some prodigy, *How can it be that God hath clouded* or darkened, etc.

We must, however, observe at the same time, that the Prophet did not mean here to invalidate the fidelity or constancy of God, but thus to rouse the attention of his own nation, who had become torpid in their sloth; for though they were pressed down under a load of evils, yet they had become hardened in their perverseness. But it was impossible that any one should really call on God, except he was humbled in mind, and brought the sacrifice of which we have spoken, even a humble and contrite spirit. (<195119> Psalm 51:19.) It was, then, the Prophet's object to soften the hardness which he knew prevailed in almost the whole people. This was the reason why he exclaimed, in a kind of astonishment, *How has God clouded*, etc.^{F26}

Some render the words, “How has God raised up,” etc., which may be allowed, provided it be not taken in a good sense, for it is said, *in his wrath*; but in this case the words to raise up and to cast down ought to be read conjointly; for when one wishes to break in pieces an earthen vessel, he not only casts it on the ground, but he raises it up, that it may be thrown down with greater force. We may, then, take this meaning, that God, in order that he might with greater violence break in pieces his people, had raised them up, not to honor them, but in order to dash them more violently on the ground. However, as this sense seems perhaps too refined, I am content with the first explanation, that God had *clouded the daughter of Zion in his wrath*; and then follows an explanation, that he had *cast her from heaven to the earth*. So then God covered with darkness his people, when he drew them down from the high dignity which they had for a time enjoyed. He had, then, *cast on the earth all the glory of Israel, and remembered not his footstool*.

The Prophet seems here indirectly to contend with God, because he had not spared his own sanctuary; for God, as it has been just stated, had chosen Mount Sion for himself, where he designed to be prayed to, because he had placed there the memorial of his name. As, then, he had not spared his own sanctuary, it did not appear consistent with his constancy, and he also seemed thus to have disregarded his own glory. But the design of the Prophet is rather to shew to the people how much God’s wrath had been kindled, when he spared not even his own sanctuary. For he takes this principle as granted, that God is never without reason angry, and never exceeds the due measure of punishment. As, then, God’s wrath was so great that he destroyed his own Temple, it was a token of dreadful wrath; and what was the cause but the sins of men? for God, as I have said, always preserves moderation in his judgments. He, then, could not have better expressed to the people the heinousness of their sins, than by laying before them this fact, that God *remembered not his footstool*.

And the Temple, by a very suitable metaphor, is called the footstool of God. It is, indeed, called his habitation; for in Scripture the Temple is often said to be the house of God. It was then the house, the habitation, and the rest of God. But as men are ever inclined to superstition, in order to raise up their thoughts above earthly elements, we are reminded, on the other hand, in Scripture, that the Temple was the *footstool of God*. So in the Psalms,

“Adore ye before his footstool,” (<199905> Psalm 99:5;)

and again,

“We shall adore in the place where his feet stand.”

(<19D207> Psalm 132:7.)

We, then, see that the two expressions, apparently different, do yet well agree, that the Temple was the house of God and his habitation, and that yet it was only his footstool. It was the house of God, because the faithful found by experience that he was there present; as, then, God gave tokens of his presence, the Temple was rightly called the house; of God, his rest and habitation. But that the faithful might not fix their minds on the visible sanctuary, and thus by indulging a gross imagination, fall into superstition, and put an idol in the place of God, the Temple was called the footstool of God. For as it was a footstool, it behooved the faithful to rise up higher and to know that God was really sought, only when they raised their thoughts above the world. We now perceive what was the purpose of this mode of speaking.

God is said *not to have remembered his Temple*, not because he had wholly disregarded it, but because the destruction of the Temple could produce no other opinion in men. All, then, who saw that the Temple had been burnt by profane hands, and pulled down after it had been plundered, thought that the Temple was forsaken by God; and so also he speaks by Ezekiel, (<261018> Ezekiel 10:18.) Then this oblivion, or not remembering, refers to the thoughts of men; for however God may have remembered the Temple, yet he seemed for a time to have disregarded it. We must, at the same time, bear in mind what I have said, that the Prophet here did not intend to dispute with God, or to contend with him, but, on the contrary, to shew what the people deserved; for God was so indignant on account of their sins, that he suffered his own Temple to be profaned. The same thing also follows respecting the kingdom, —

<250202> **Lamentations 2:2**

2. The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied: he hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah; he hath brought them down to the ground: he hath polluted the kingdom and the Princes thereof.

2. Perdidit Dominus, non pepercit (hoc est, non parcendo, absque venia) omnia habitacula Jacob; diruit in excandescencia sua munitiones filiae Jehudah; detraxit ad terram: profanavit regnum ejus et principes ejus.

He pursues the same subject, but in other words. He first says, that God *had without pardon destroyed all the habitations of Jacob*; some read, “all the beauty (or the ornament) of Jacob.” But the other rendering is more suitable, that he had destroyed all the *habitations* of Jacob; and then that he had *demolished in his indignation*, etc. The word is derived from what means excess; but we know that all words signifying wrath are transferred to God, but they do not properly belong to him. God, then, *in his violent wrath had demolished all fortresses*, and *cast them to the ground*; and afterwards, that he had *profaned*, etc.

This profanation of the kingdom, and of the princes, corresponds with the former verse, where he said that God had not remembered his footstool for we know that the kingdom was sacerdotal and consecrated to God. When, therefore, it was polluted, it follows that God in a manner exposed his name to reproach, because the mouth of all the ungodly was thus opened, so that they insolently poured forth their slanders. That God, then, spared not the kingdom nor the Temple, it hence followed that his wrath against the Jews was dreadful. Now, as he is a righteous judge, it follows, that such was the greatness of the sins of the Jews, that they sustained the blame for this extreme sacrilege; for it was through their sins that God’s name was exposed to reproach both as to the Temple and the kingdom.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou settest before us at this day those ancient examples by which we perceive with what heavy punishments thou didst chastise those whom thou hadst adopted,

— O grant, that we may learn to regard thee, and carefully to examine our whole life, and duly consider how indulgently thou hast preserved us to this day, so that we may ever patiently bear thy chastisements, and with a humble and sincere heart flee to thy mercy, until thou be pleased to raise up thy Church from that miserable state in which it now lies, and so to restore it, that thy name may, through thine only-begotten Son, be glorified throughout the whole world. — Amen.

LECTURE FIFTH

<250203> Lamentations 2:3

3. He hath cut off in *his* fierce anger all the horn of Israel: he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, *which* devoureth round about.

3. Confregit in excandescencia irae suae omne cornu Israelis: retraxit (*vel*, redire fecit) retrorsum dexteram suam a facie inimici, et exarsit in Jacob tanquam ignis, flamma devoravit in circuitu.

Jeremiah expresses the same thing in various ways; but all that he says tends to shew that it was an evidence of God's extreme vengeance, when the people, the city, and the Temple, were destroyed. But it ought to be observed, that God is here represented as the author of that calamity: the Prophet would have otherwise lamented in vain over the ruin of his own country; but as in all adversities he acknowledged the hand of God, he afterwards added, that God had a just reason why he was so grievously displeased with his own people.

He then says, that *every horn* had been *broken* by God. We know that by *horn* is meant strength as well as excellency or dignity and I am disposed to include both here, though the word breaking seems rather to refer to strength or power. But the whole clause must be noticed, that God had *broken every horn of Israel in the indignation of his wrath*. The Prophet intimates that God had not been angry with his people as though he had been offended by slight transgressions, but that the measure of his wrath had been unusual, even because the impiety of the people had so burst forth, that the offense given to God could not have been slight. Then, by *indignation of wrath* the Prophet does not mean an excess, as though God had through a violent impulse rushed forth to take vengeance; but he rather intimates that the people had become so wicked, that it did not behove God to punish in an ordinary way an impiety so inveterate.

He then adds, that God had *withdrawn, his right hand from before the enemy*, and that at the same time he had *burned like a fire*, the flame of

which had *devoured all around*. The Prophet here refers to two things; the first is, that though God had been accustomed to help his people, and to oppose their enemies, as they had experienced his aid in the greatest dangers, yet now his people were forsaken and left destitute of all hope. The first clause, then, declares, that God would not be the deliverer of his people as formerly, because they had forsaken him. But he speaks figuratively, that God had *drawn back his right hand*; and God's right hand means his protection, as it is well known. But the Prophet's meaning is by no means obscure, even that there was hereafter no hope that God would meet the enemies of his people, and thus preserve them in safety, for he had drawn back his hand.^{F27} But there is a second thing added, even that God's hand *burned like fire*. Now it was in itself a grievous thing that the people had been so rejected by God, that no help could be expected from him; but it was still a harder thing, that he went forth armed to destroy his people. And the metaphor of fire ought to be noticed; for had he said that God's right hand was against his people, the expression would not have been so forcible; but when he compared God's right hand to fire which burned, and whose flame consumed all Israel, it was a much more dreadful thing.^{F28}

Moreover, by these words the Israelites were reminded that they were not to lament their calamities in an ordinary way, but ought, on the contrary, to have seriously considered the cause of all their evils, even the provoking of God's wrath against themselves; and not only so, but that God was angry with them in an unusual degree, and yet justly, so that they had no reason to complain. It follows, —

<250204>Lamentations 2:4	
4. He hath bent his bow like an enemy: he stood with his right hand as an adversary, and slew all <i>that were</i> pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion: he poured out his fury like fire.	4. Extendit arcum suum tanquam inimicus, stetit dextera ejus tanquam adversarius, et occidit omnex desiderabiles aspectu (oculo) in tabernaculo filiae Sion (<i>vel</i> , in tabernaculum filiae Sion); effudit tanquam ignem Iracundiam suam.

He employs now another metaphor, that God, who was wont to defend his people, now took up arms against them; for stating a part for the whole, he includes in the *bow* every other weapon. When, therefore, he says that God had bent his bow, it is the same as though he said that he was fully armed. The bow, then, as we have before seen, means every kind of weapon. He then adds, that *his right hand stood as an adversary*. Here he more plainly describes what he had before touched upon, even that God had not only given up his people to the will of their enemies, but that he himself had held up a banner to their enemies, and went before them with an armed hand. Nor is there a doubt but that by the right hand of God he means all their enemies; for it was necessary carefully to impress this fact on the minds of the people, that the war had not been brought by the Chaldeans, but that God had resolved thereby to punish the wickedness of the people, and especially their desperate obstinacy, for he had omitted nothing to restore the people to the right way.

Whenever, then, there is mention made here of God, let us know that the people are reminded, as I have already said, that they had to do with God, lest they should forget this, or think that it was adverse fortune, or dream of some other causes of evils, as men are wont in this respect to be very ingenious in deceiving themselves. And we shall see this more clearly hereafter, where it is said, that God had thought to destroy the wall of Jerusalem; but this thought was the same as his decree. Then the Prophet explains there more fully what is yet here substantially found, even that God was brought forward thus before the people, that they might learn to humble themselves under his mighty hand. The hand of God was not indeed visible, but the Prophet shews that the Chaldeans were not alone to be regarded, but rather that the hidden hand of God, by which they were guided, ought to have been seen by the eyes of faith. It was, then, this hand of God that stood against the people.

It then follows, *He slew all the chosen men*; some read, “all things desirable;” but it seems more suitable to consider men as intended, as though he had said, that the flower of the people perished by the hand of God *in the tabernacle of the daughter of Sion*; though the last clause would unite better with the end of the verse, that *on the tabernacle of the daughter of Sion God had poured forth his wrath*, or his anger, *as fire*.

He repeats the metaphor which he had used in the last verse; and this is what we ought carefully to notice; for God threatens by Isaiah that he would be a fire to devour his enemies:

“The light of Israel shall be a fire, and his Holy One a flame of fire, and it shall devour all briars and all kinds of wood.”

(^{<231007>}Isaiah 10:7.)

There God threatened the Chaldeans, as though he had said that his vengeance would be dreadful, when as a patron and defender of his people he would contend with the Chaldeans. He there calls himself the light of Israel and the Holy One; and hence he said that he would be a fire and a flame as to the Chaldeans. But what does he say here? even that God had poured forth It is wrath as fire, that its flame had devoured all around whatever was fair to be seen in Israel. We hence see that the people had provoked against themselves the vengeance of God, which would have been otherwise poured forth on their enemies; and thus the sin of the people was doubled. It follows, —

^{<250205>}**Lamentations 2:5**

5. The Lord was an enemy: he hath swallowed up Israel, he hath swallowed up all her palaces; he hath destroyed his strong holds, and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.

5. Fuit Dominus tanquam hostis, perdidit Israelem, perdidit omnia palatia ejus, corripit munitiones ejus, auxit in filia Jehudah fletum Et lamentationem.

These words might seem superfluous, since the Prophet has often repeated, that God was become an enemy to his own people; but we shall hereafter see, that though they were extremely afflicted, they yet did not rightly consider whence their calamity arose. As, then, they had become so stupified by their evils, that they did not turn their eyes to God, they were on this account often urged and stimulated, that they might at length understand by their evils that God was a judge. Now, as it was difficult to convince them of this truth, the Prophet did not think it enough briefly to touch on it, but found it necessary to dwell on it at large, so that the people might at length be roused from their insensibility.

He then says that God himself *was to them as an enemy*, lest the Israelites should fix their eyes on the Chaldeans, and thus think that they had been the chief movers of the war. He therefore says, that they had undertaken that war through the secret influence of God, and had carried it on successfully, because God endued them with his own power. And hence the faithful ought to have concluded, that nothing could have been more grievous than to have God as their adversary; for as long as they had suffered themselves to be defended by the hand of God, they were victorious, we know, over all their enemies, so that they could then brave all dangers with impunity. The Prophet now reminds them, that as they had been successful and prosperous under the defense and protection of God, so now they were miserable, for no other reason but that God fought against them. But we ought at the same time to bear in mind the truth, which we have noticed, that God is never angry with men without reason; and since he was especially inclined to shew favor to his people, we must understand that he would not have been thus indignant, had not necessity constrained him.

He has destroyed Israel, he says; *he has destroyed all his palaces*; and afterwards, *he has dissipated* or demolished *all his fortresses*; and finally, *he has increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation*; **תַּאֲנִיָּה וְאֲנִיָּה** *tanie veanie*, words derived from the same root, but joined together for the sake of amplifying, not only in this place,. but also in the twenty-ninth chapter of Isaiah, and in other places. The meaning is, that God had not put an end to his vengeance, because the people had not resolved to put an end to their obstinate wickedness. He afterwards adds, —

<250206> **Lamentations 2:6**

6. And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a garden; he hath destroyed his places of the assembly: the Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised, in the indignation of his anger, the king and the priest.	6. Et transtulit (vel, dissipavit, vel evertit) tanquam hortum tabernaculum suum (alii vertunt, tabernaculum suum tanquam hortum,) perdidit testimonium suum, oblitus est Jehova in Sion conven tus sollemnis (vel, sacrificii) et sabbathi, et quidem sunt voces, sed ego non adeo scrupulose distinguo) regem et sacerdotem.
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Then he says first, that *his tabernacle had been overthrown by God*. They who render it “cottage” extenuate too much what is spoken of; nor does the Prophet simply compare the sanctuary of God to a cottage. Then I take tabernacle in a good sense. With regard to the verb **חָמַם**, *chemes*, as it means to migrate, they properly render it, as I think, who give this version, that God had removed his tabernacle; nor do I disapprove of repeating the word tabernacle. God, then, had removed his tabernacle, as though it were a cottage in a garden. Watchmen, as it appears from the first chapter of Isaiah, had then cottages in their gardens, but only for a time, as is the case at this day with those who watch over their vineyards; they have, until the time of vintage, small chests in which they conceal themselves. The Prophet then says, that though God’s tabernacle was honorable, and of high dignity, it was yet like a cottage in a garden. It is not, however, a simple comparison, as before stated, and therefore I reject the opinion of those who render it cottage, for it is not suitable, and it would be unmeaning. *God, then, hath removed his tabernacle as a garden*, that is, the sanctuary where he dwelt. And how did he remove it? even as a garden-cottage. And as watchers of gardens were wont to construct their little cots of leaves of trees and slight materials, so the Prophet, in order to increase commiseration, says, that the sacred habitation of God was like a cottage in a garden, because it was removed from one place to another; and thus he intimates that God regarded as nothing what he had previously adorned with singular excellencies. ^{F29}

He then adds, that God had *destroyed his testimony*. By the word, **מוֹעֵד**, *muod*, he means the same throughout; but some confine it to the ark of the covenant, and of this I do not disapprove. We must yet bear in mind the design of the Prophet, which was to shew that by the entire ruin of the Temple the covenant of God was in a manner abolished. It is, indeed, certain, that God had not forgotten his faithfulness and constancy, but this abolition of his covenant refers to what appeared to men. He then says, that the sanctuary which was, as it were, the testimony of God’s favor, had been overthrown. Now, as he repeats again the word **מוֹעֵד**, *muod*, it may be that he thus refers to the Tabernacle, either because the holy assemblies met there, or because it had been solemnly dedicated, that God might there hold intercourse with his people. For **מוֹעֵד**, *muod*, means a fixed time, it means an assembly, it means a festival, and sometimes it means a sacrifice; and all these signification’s are not unsuitable: yet when

he says that God had *destroyed his testimony*, I apply this to the Tabernacle itself, or, if it seems to any preferable, to the ark of the covenant; though the former is the most suitable, because it was a place consecrated, as it has been stated, for mutual intercourse.

He afterwards says, that God had *forgotten the assembly*, the sacrifice, or the tabernacle; for it is the same word again, but it seems not to be taken in the same sense. Then I think that מועד, *muod*, is to be taken here for the assembly. As he had previously said, that the place where the holy assemblies met had been overthrown or destroyed, so now he says, that God had no care for all those assemblies, as though they had been buried in perpetual oblivion; for he mentions also the *Sabbath*, which corresponds with the subject. God, then, had forgotten all the assemblies as well as the Sabbath. There is, again, as to this last word, a part stated for the whole, for this word was no doubt intended to include all the festivals. The meaning of the passage then is, that the impiety of the people had been so great, that God, having, as it were, forgotten his covenant, had inflicted such a dreadful punishment, that religion, for a time, was in a manner trodden under foot.

He says, in the last place, that the *king and the priest* had been rejected by God. We have already said, that these were as two pledges of God's paternal favor; for, on the one hand, he who reigned from the posterity of David was a living image of Christ; and on the other hand, there was always a high-priest from the posterity of Aaron to reconcile men to God. It was then the same as though God shewed himself in every way propitious to the chosen people. Then their true happiness was founded on the kingdom and the priesthood; for the kingdom was, as it were, a mark of God's favor for their defense, and the priesthood was to them the means by which reconciliation with God was obtained. When, therefore, God wholly disregarded the king and the priest, it became hence evident, that he was greatly displeased with his people, having thus, in a manner, obliterated his favors. It follows, —

7. The Lord hath cast off his altar; he hath abhorred his sanctuary: he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have made a noise in the house of the Lord, as in the day of a solemn feast.

7. Abominatus est Dominus altare suum, repulit (vel, rejecit procul ab animo suo) sanctuarium suum, tradidit in manum hostis muros palatiorum ejus, vocem ediderunt in domo Jehovae tanquam in die sacri conventus (vel, solemnis; iterum ponitur nomen מועד tamen accipitur vel pro conventu vel pro die festo.)

He proceeds with the same subject, and adopts similar words. He says first, that God had *abominated his altar*,^{F30} an expression not strictly proper, but the Prophet could not otherwise fully shew to the Jews what they deserved; for had he only spoken of the city, of the lands, of the palaces, of the vineyards, and, in short, of all their possessions, it would have been a much lighter matter; but when he says that God had counted as nothing all their sacred things, — the altar, the Temple, the ark of the covenant, and festive days, — when, therefore, he says, that God had not only disregarded, but had also cast away from him these things, which yet especially availed to conciliate his favor, the people must have hence perceived, except they were beyond measure stupid, how grievously they had provoked God's wrath against themselves; for this was the same as though heaven and earth were blended together. Had there been an upsetting of all things, had the sun left its place and sunk into darkness, had the earth heaved upwards, the confusion would have hardly been more dreadful, than when God put forth thus his hand against the sanctuary, the altar, the festal days, and all their sacred things. But we must refer to the reason why this was done, even because the Temple had been long polluted by the iniquities of the people, and because all sacred things had been wickedly and disgracefully profaned. We now, then, understand the reason why the Prophet enlarged so much on a subject in itself sufficiently plain.

He afterwards adds, He *hath delivered all the palaces*, etc.; as though he had said, that the city had not been taken by the valor of enemies, but that the Chaldeans had fought under the authority and banner of God. He, in short, intimates that the Jews had miserably perished, because they

perished through their own fault; and that the Chaldeans had proved victorious in battle, and had taken the city, not through their own courage or skill, but because God had resolved to punish that ungodly and wicked people.

It follows in the last place, that the *enemies had made a noise in the temple of God as in the day of solemnity*. Here also the Prophet shews, that God would have never suffered the enemies insolently to exult and to revel in the very Temple, had not the Israelites deserved all this; for the insolence of their enemies was not unknown to God, and he might have easily checked it if he pleased. Why, then, did he grant so much license to these profane enemies? even because the Jews themselves had previously polluted the Temple, so that he abhorred all their solemn assemblies, as also he declares by Isaiah, that he detested their festivals, Sabbaths, and new moons. (<230113> Isaiah 1:13, 14.) But it was a shocking change, when enemies entered the place which God had consecrated for himself, and there insolently boasted and uttered base and wicked calumnies against God! But the sadder the spectacle, the more detestable appeared the impiety of the people, which had been the cause of so great evils. For we ought ever to remember what I have often stated, that these circumstances were noticed by the Prophet, that the people, might at length acknowledge themselves guilty as to all these evils, which they would have otherwise ascribed to the Chaldeans. That, then, the Chaldeans polluted the Temple, that they trod under foot all sacred things, all this the Prophet shews was to be ascribed to the Jews themselves, who had, through their own conduct, opened the Temple to the Chaldeans, who had exposed all sacred things to their will and pleasure. It follows, —

<250208> **Lamentations 2:8**

8. The Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion; he hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying: therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together.	8. Cogitavit Jehova ut perderet murum filiae Sion, extendit lineam, non retraxit manum suam a dissipatione; itaque luxit antemurale, et murus; pariter corruerunt (<i>vel</i> , eversi sunt.)
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The verb to *think*, has more force than what is commonly assigned to it; for it would be very flat to say, that God *thought to destroy*; but to think here means to resolve or to decree.^{F31} This is one thing. And then we must bear in mind the contrast between this and those false imaginations, by which men are wont to be drawn away, so as not to believe that God is present in adversities as well as prosperity. As, therefore, men go willfully astray through various false thoughts, and thus withdraw themselves, as it were, designedly from God, the Prophet says here that the *walls of Jerusalem* had not *fallen* by chance, but had been overthrown through a divine decree, because God had so determined, according to what we have seen in many places throughout the book of Jeremiah: “See, these are the thoughts which God has thought respecting Jerusalem, which he has thought respecting Babylon.” The Prophet, then, in these instances, taught what he now confirms in this place, that when the city Jerusalem was destroyed, it was not what happened by chance; but because God had brought there the Chaldeans, and employed them as his instruments in taking and destroying the city: God, then, has *thought to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion*. It is, indeed, true, that the Chaldeans had actively carried on the war, and omitted nothing as to military skill, in order to take the city: but the Prophet calls here the attention of the Jews to a different thought, so that they might acknowledge that they suffered justly for their sins, and that God was the chief author of that war, and that the Chaldeans were to be viewed as hired soldiers.

He afterwards adds, that God had *extended a line* or a rule, as it is usually done in separating buildings.^{F32} And then he says, *He hath not drawn back his hand from scattering; and so it was, that the ramparts and the walls mourned, and fell down together*.^{F33} We now see that what the Prophet had in view was to lead the Jews fully to believe that the destruction was not to be ascribed to the Chaldeans, but, on the contrary, to God. Added at the same time must be another part of what is here taught, that God would not have been so displeased with the holy city which he had chosen, had not the people extremely provoked him with their sins. It now follows, —

9. Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars; her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the Lord.

9. Demersae sunt in terra portae ejus, perdidit et confregit vectes ejus, rex ejus et principes ejus in gentibus (vel, ad gentes;) nulla lex, etiam Prophetæ non reperiunt visionem a Jehova.

He again relates in other words what he had said, that the walls of Jerusalem had fallen. But he now speaks of the gates and says, that they had *sunk into the ground*, or had become fixed in the ground; for it may be explained in both ways; as though he had said, that the gates had been no hindrance to the enemies so as to prevent them to enter the city. He thus derides the foolish confidence of the people, who relied on their defenses and thought the city impregnable. He then says that the *gates had sunk*, or had become fixed *in the ground*.

He then says that God had *destroyed and broken her bars*; for no doubt the gates had firm and strong bars. He then says that neither the gates nor the bars were found sufficient, when God stretched forth his hand to the Chaldeans, to lead them into the city. He afterwards adds, that both the king and the princes had been driven into exile; for when he says, *among the nations*, or to the nations, he intimates that there was no more a king, for he and the royal seed and the princes were gone into banishment. The rest I defer until tomorrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that since so many tokens of thy wrath meet us at this day, we may without delay return to thee, and so submit to thee in true repentance, as to strive at the same time to be reconciled to thee; and as a Mediator has been given to us to lead us to thee, — O grant that we may by a true faith seek him, and follow wherever he may call us, that having been purified from all pollution's, we may be glorified by thee our Father, and may so call on thee, that we may find thy grace present in all our evils.
Amen. —

LECTURE SIXTH

Among the calamities of Jerusalem which the Prophet deplores, he mentions this as one, that there was *no law* or doctrine. The Chaldee Paraphraser thought that the reference is to punishment, but he perverts the words of the Prophet. There follows afterwards an amplification; after having said, *there is no law*, he adds, *her prophets also have not found a vision from Jehovah*. There is then no doubt but that the Prophet means that among the miseries of the people this was the greatest, that they were without doctrine or teaching, and without prophets. The word תורה, *ture*, is indeed used often by way of excellency to designate the law, but it signifies also doctrine or instruction; and the meaning here is the same, as though the Prophet had said, that the Jews had been so forsaken by God, that they found no consolation in their evils. This may be better understood by a similar complaint in the Psalms:

“Our signs we see not, there is not a Prophet any more, there is no more any one who understands.” (^{<197409>}Psalm 74:9.)

The faithful there say, that they were in a hopeless state, because God shewed them no signs of his favor; and signs were given when God appeared propitious to them. Now, as God had testified that there would be always faithful teachers to guide the people, they therefore complained that there was no Prophet, that there was no one any more who had a vision. And so in this place the Prophet says, that there was *no law*, and that *the prophets* were without a vision, even because God, as though wearied, had given up the care of the people: for his paternal favor could not have been better known than by this evidence, that he sent them prophets; and it is certain that all prophecies ceased when the people were driven into exile.

A long time after, Daniel began to exhort the faithful to hope for a return; and on this account it is said by Isaiah,

“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, will our God say.”
(^{<234001>}Isaiah 40:1.)

There Isaiah indicates that there would be a temporary silence; for all the prophets would be mute, that the people might lie in a hopeless state, and

for this reason, because they had long abused God’s patience, and had disregarded that singular blessing, when God manifested by his servants that he was solicitous for their well-being and safety, as he had often said, that he rose up early and extended his hand to them by the prophets. As, then, the gift of prophecy was to the people a sure pledge not only of God’s favor, but also of the solicitude which he entertained for them; so when he withheld prophets from the people, he departed from them, having forsaken as it were his station among them. ^{F34}

We now then understand what the Prophet meant by saying, that there was *no doctrine* any more, and that the *prophets* of Jerusalem *found no vision* any more *from Jehovah*; for God, after his word had been long profaned, became silent, and deigned not for a time to open his sacred mouth, because he had seen that he had been treated with derision.

Now this passage teaches us, that nothing is more desirable in evils, and that there is no better remedy, than to have God’s promise, that he will at length be merciful to us. For when any promise of God is set before us, it is like a small light kindled in darkness. Though then our misery were like a thick darkness, yet when God shews some token of favor by his promises, that ought to be sufficient to give us hope and joy. On the other hand, when no promises of God occur to us, it is a sure token of reprobation, unless that he sometimes thus tries us, as we read here. But the faithful also themselves, when they perceive no evidence of God’s paternal favor in his promises, are as it were in a hopeless state, and sunk in the lowest depths. Hence it is then only that we arise from death to life, and find support so as not to be overwhelmed with despair, when God is pleased to speak to us. It now follows, —

<div><250210> Lamentations 2:10</div>	
10. The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, and keep silence: they have cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground.	10. Sedent ad terram, silent senes filiae Sion, attollunt pulverem super caput suum, accincti sunt saccis; demiserunt (vel, demittunt) ad terram caput suum virgines (aut, puellae) Jerusalem.

The Prophet here strikingly represents the grievousness of the people's calamity, when he says, that *the elders*, as in hopeless despair, were lying *on the ground*, that they *cast dust on their heads*, that they were *clad in sackcloth*, as it was usually done in very grievous sorrow, and that the *virgins* bent their *heads down to the ground*. The meaning is, that the elders knew not what to do, and led others. to join them in acts of fruitless and abject lamentation. We indeed know that young women are over-careful as to their form and beauty, and indulge themselves in pleasures; and that when they roll themselves with their face and hair on the ground, it is a token of extreme mourning. This is what the Prophet means.

They were wont indeed to put on sackcloth as a token of repentance, and to cast dust on their heads; but their minds were often so confused, that they only thus set forth their mourning and sorrow, and had no regard to God; and hypocrites, when they put on sackcloth, pretended to repent, but it was a false pretense. Now in this place the Prophet does not mean that the elders by adopting these rites professed to repent and humbly to solicit pardon; but refers to them only as tokens of sorrow; as though he had said, that the elders had no resources, and that the young women had no hope nor joy. For the elders did lie down on the ground, as it is usual with those who have no remedy. We now understand the meaning of the Prophet. ^{F35} It follows, —

<250211> Lamentations 2:11	
11. Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people; because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city.	11. Defecerunt in lachrymis oculi mei, conturbata sunt viscera mea, effusum est ad terram jecur meum, propter contritionem filiae populi mei, dum evanuit parvulus et sugens Ubra in compitis urbis.

The Prophet himself now speaks, and says that his *eyes were consumed with tears*, while weeping on account of the calamities of the people: even in the deepest grief tears at length dry up; but when there is no end of weeping, the sorrow, which as it were never ripens, must necessarily be very bitter. Jeremiah then expresses now the vehemence of his grief when

he says that his *eyes failed through shedding tears*. He said in Jeremiah 9, “Who will give me eyes for fountains?” that is, who will make my eyes to turn into fountains, that they may continually flow? and this he said, because he saw how dreadful a vengeance of God impended over the obstinate. But now, when he sees accomplished what he had dreaded, he says, that his eyes were consumed with weeping.

To the same purpose is what he adds, that his *bowels were disturbed*. It is the same verb as we have seen before, **המרמרו**, *chemermeru*; which some render “bound,” as we also said then. I know not why one expositor has changed what he had elsewhere said rightly; he puts here, “swollen have my bowels.” But I see no reason why the verb should be taken here in a different sense, for it immediately follows, *my liver is poured forth on the ground*. He may, indeed, have included other parts of the intestines by stating a part for the whole. The word here properly means the liver, as when Solomon says,

“He hath pierced my liver.” (<²⁰⁰⁷²³> Proverbs 7:23.)

But Jeremiah, in short, shews that all his faculties were so seized with grief, that no part was exempt. He then says that his *liver was poured forth*, but in the same sense in which he said that his bowels were disturbed. They are indeed hyperbolical expressions; but as to the meaning, Jeremiah simply expresses his feelings; for there is no doubt but that he was incredibly anxious and sorrowful on account of so great a calamity; for he not only lamented the adversity in no ordinary way, but he also considered how wicked was that obstinacy in which the people had hardened themselves for almost fifty years; for he had spent himself in vain, not for a short time, but for nearly fifty years he never ceased to speak to them. He then, no doubt, thought within himself what the people had deserved, so that he had no common dread of God’s vengeance. This, then, was the reason why he said that his bowels were disturbed and his liver poured forth.^{F36} He, however, mentions the cause of his sorrow, even *the breach* or destruction *of the daughter of his people*; and he mentions one thing in particular, because the *little one and he who sucked the breasts vanished away in the streets of the city*; for so I render the verb **עֲתָף**, *otheph*, which properly means to cover; but its secondary meaning is to vanish away, as we shall again presently see. It was, indeed, a miserable sight, when not only men and women were everywhere slain, but when,

through famine, little children also fainted. We, indeed, know that infants move our pity, for the tears of a child in hunger penetrate into our inmost souls. When, therefore, little children and those who hung on their mothers' breasts, cried through the streets of the city, it must have touched the most iron hearts. It was then not without reason that Jeremiah referred to this in particular, that *little children and sucklings vanished away*, not in a deserted and barren land, but in the very streets of the city. It follows, —

<250212> Lamentations 2:12	
12. They say to their mothers, Where is corn and wine? When they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out into their mother's bosom.	12. Matribus suis dicunt, Ubi triticum et vinum? cum evanescunt (in evanescendo ipsos, ad verbum) tanquam vulneratus (aut, mortuus; dum evanescunt Ergo tanquam vulnerati, aut, mortui; est numeri enallage) in compitis urbis (iterum repetit,) et cum se effundit (vel, effunditur) anima eorum in sinum matrum ipsorum.

There is either a personification in the words of the Prophet, or he speaks now of another party, for he cannot refer now to children sucking their mothers' breasts, for they could not have expressly said, *Where is corn and wine?* and the use of wine is not allowed to infants. Then the words of the Prophets extend further, for not infants, but children somewhat grown up, could have thus spoken. And in this view there is nothing unreasonable or forced, for he spoke of little children, and to little children he joined infants. ^{F37} And now he refers only to one party, even that children, who could now speak, complained to their mothers that there was no bread nor wine, that is, no means of support, no food.

If, however, any one prefers a personification, I do not object; and this view would not be unsuitable, that even infants by their silence cried for food; for the tears of children speak more efficaciously than when one gives utterance to words.

However this may be, the Prophet intimates that such was the scarcity, that children died in the bosom of their mothers, and in vain sought food and cried that they were without support. He then says that they *said to*

their mothers,^{F38} by which expression he means that their complaints were the more pitiable, because their mothers could afford them no help. And we know how tender and affectionate are the feelings of mothers, for a mother would willingly nourish her own child, not only with her own milk, but even, if possible, with her life. When, therefore, the Prophet says that children cried to their mothers, he means to represent a sad spectacle, and which ought justly to produce horror in the minds of all. *Where is bread and wine?* he says, *even when they vanished away* (some say “fainted,” but I prefer, as I have said, this rendering) *as a dead man in the streets*; and further, *when they poured out*, a sadder thing still, — *when they poured out their souls into the bosom of their mothers*. It now follows, —

<250213> Lamentations 2:13	
13. What thing shall I take to witness for thee? What thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? For thy breach <i>is</i> great like the sea; who can heal thee?	13. Quid contestabor tibi (<i>vel</i> , adducam tibi testes, <i>vel</i> , testificabor tecum?) quid simile tibi filia Jerusalem (<i>vel</i> , cur? מַה potest trans ferri utroque modo;) quid (<i>vel</i> , cur) aequabo tibi quiequam (<i>est repetitio, sed diverso verbo</i>) ut te Consoler, virgo filia Sion? Quia magna sicut mare contritio tua; quis sanabit te?

When we wish to alleviate grief, we are wont to bring examples which have some likeness to the case before us. For when any one seeks to comfort one in illness, he will say, “Thou art not the first nor the last, thou hast many like thee; why shouldest thou so much torment thyself; for this is a condition almost common to mortals.” As, then, it is an ordinary way of alleviating grief to bring forward examples, the Prophet says, “What examples shall I set before thee? that is, why or to what purpose should I mention to thee this or that man who is like thee? or, *What then shall I call thee to witness*, or testify to thee?,” But I prefer this rendering, “To what purpose should I bring witnesses to thee, who may say that they have seen something of a like kind? for these things will avail thee nothing.”^{F39}

The Prophet, then, means that comforts commonly administered to those in misery, would be of no benefit, because the calamity of Jerusalem

exceeded all other examples, as though he had said, “No such thing had ever happened in the world; God had never before thundered so tremendously against any people; were I, then, to seek to bring examples to thee, I should be utterly at a loss; for when I compare thee with others in misery, I find that thou exceedest them all. “We now, then, perceive the meaning of the Prophet: he wished by this mode of speaking to exaggerate the grievousness of Jerusalem’s calamity, for she had been afflicted in a manner unusual and unheard of before; as though he had said that the Jews had become miserable beyond all other nations. *Why then should I bring witnesses before thee? and why should I make any one like thee? why should I make other miserable people equal to thee?* He adds the reason or the end (for the ך, *vau*, here ought to be so rendered) *that I might comfort thee*, that is, after the usual manner of men. He afterwards adds, *because great as the sea is thy breach* or breaking; that is, “Thy calamity is the deepest abyss: I cannot then find any in the whole world whom I can compare to thee, for thy calamity exceeds all calamities; nor is there anything like it that can be set before thee, so that thou art become a memorable example for all ages.”

But when we hear the Prophet speaking thus, we ought to remember that we have succeeded in the place of the ancient people. As, then, God had formerly punished with so much severity the sins of his chosen people, we ought to beware lest we in the present day provoke him to an extremity by our perverseness, for he remains ever like himself. But whenever it may happen that we are severely afflicted and broken down by his hand, let us still know that there is yet some comfort remaining for us, even when sunk down in the lowest depth. The Prophet, indeed, exaggerates in this place the evils of the people; but he had previously begun to encourage the faithful to entertain hope; and he will again repeat the same doctrine. But it was necessary for the Prophet to use such words until those who were as yet torpid in their sins, and did not sufficiently consider the design of God’s vengeance, were really humbled. He adds, —

14. Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee; and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens, and causes of banishment.

14. Prophetæ tui viderunt tibi vanitatem et insulsitatem (vel, insipidum,) et non aperuerunt super iniquitate tua (hoc est, non revelarunt tibi; aut, manifestarunt iniquitatem tuam,) ut converterent captivitatem tuam (alii vertunt, aversionem tuam, vel, defectionem) et viderunt tibi prophetias vanitatis, et expulsiones.

Here the Prophet condemns the Jews for that wantonness by which they had, as it were, designedly destroyed themselves, as though they had willfully drunk sweet poison. They had been inebriated with those fallacies which we have seen, when impostors promised them a prosperous condition; for we have seen that false prophets often boldly declared that whatever Jeremiah threatened was of no account. Since, then, the Jews were inebriated with such flatteries, and disregarded God's judgment, and freely indulged themselves in their vices, the effect was, that God's wrath had been always and continually kindled by them. Now, then, Jeremiah reproves them for such wantonness, even because they willfully sought to be deceived, and with avidity cast themselves into snares, by seeking for themselves flatterers as teachers. Micah also reproves them for the same thing, that they sought prophets who promised them a fruitful vintage and an abundant harvest. (<330210> Micah 2:10.) The meaning of Jeremiah is the same.

He says that *prophets had prophesied*, or had seen *vanity for them*; but the verb refers to prophecies, as prophets are called seers. He then says that *the prophets had seen vanity and insipidity*^{F40} This availed not to extenuate the fault of the people; and Jeremiah does not here flatter the people, as though they had perished through the fault of others; and yet this was a common excuse, for most, when they had been deceived, complained that they had fallen through being led astray, and also that they had not been sufficiently cautious when subtle men were laying snares for them. But the Prophet here condemns the Jews, because they had been deceived by false prophets, as it was a just reward for their vainglory and ambition. For they had very delicate ears, and free reproofs could not be endured by them; in a

word, when they rejected all sound doctrine, the devil must have necessarily succeeded in the place of God, as also Paul says,

“that those were justly punished who were blinded by God so as to believe a lie, because they received not the truth.”

(^{<530211>}2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12.)

We now perceive the design of the Prophet: he says that the Jews had indeed been deceived by the false prophets; but this had happened through their own fault, because they had not submitted to obey God, because they had rejected sound doctrine, because they had been rebellious against all his counsels. At the same time, not only their crime seems to have been thus exaggerated, but also their shame was brought before them, — because they had dared to set up these impostors against Jeremiah as well as other servants of God; for they had boasted greatly of these their false prophets whenever they sought to exult against God. How great was this presumption! When the false prophets had promised them security, they immediately triumphed in an insolent manner over Jeremiah, as though they were victorious. As, then, their wickedness and arrogance had been such against God, the Prophet justly retorts upon them, “Behold now as to your false prophets; for when they lately promised to you prosperity of every kind, I was inhumanly treated, and my calling was disdainfully repudiated by you; let now your false prophets come forward: be wise at length through your evils, and acknowledge what it is to have acted so haughtily against God and against his servants.” We now understand why the Prophet says, “They have seen for you vanity and insipidity.”

He adds, *they have not opened*, or revealed, &c. The preposition **על**, *ol*, is here redundant; the words are, “they have not revealed upon thine iniquity.” There is, indeed, a suitableness in the words in that language, that they had not applied their revelations to the iniquities of the people, for they would have been thus restored to the right way, and would have thus obviated the vengeance of God.

Now, this passage ought to be carefully noticed: Jeremiah spoke of the fallacies of the false prophets, which he said were insipid: he now expresses how they had deceived the people, even because they *disclosed not their iniquities*. Let us then know that there is nothing more necessary than to be warned, that being conscious of our iniquities we may repent. And this was the chief benefit to be derived from the teaching of the

prophets. For the other part, the foretelling of future things would have had but little effect had not the prophets preached respecting the vengeance of God, — had they not exhorted the people to repentance, — had they not bidden them by faith to embrace the mercy of God. Then Jeremiah in a manner detects the false doctrines of those who had corrupted the prophetic doctrine, by saying that they *had not disclosed iniquities*. Let us then learn by this mark how to distinguish between the faithful servants of God and impostors. For the Lord by his word summons us before his tribunal, and would have our iniquities discovered, that we may loathe ourselves, and thus open an entrance for mercy. But when what is brought before us only tickles our ears and feeds our curiosity, and, at the same time, buries all our iniquities, let us then know that the refined things which vastly please men are insipid and useless. Let, then, the doctrine of repentance be approved by us, the doctrine which leads us to God's tribunal, so that being cast down in ourselves we may flee to his mercy.

He afterwards adds, *that they might turn back thy captivity*; some prefer, "thy defection" — and this meaning is :not unsuitable; but the Prophet, I have no doubt, refers to punishment rather than to a crime. Then the captivity of the people would have been reversed had the people in time repented; for we obviate God's wrath by repentance: "If we judge ourselves," says Paul, "we shall not be judged." (<461131> 1 Corinthians 11:31.) As, then, miserable men anticipate God's judgment when they become judges of themselves, the Prophet does not without reason say that the false prophets had not disclosed their iniquities, so that they might remain quiet in their own country, and never be driven into exile. How so? for God would have been thus pacified, that is, had the people willingly turned to him, as it is said in Isaiah,

"And be converted, and I should heal them." (<230610> Isaiah 6:10.)

Conversion, then, is said there to lead to healing; for as fire when fuel is withdrawn is extinguished, so also when we cease to sin fuel is not supplied to God's wrath. We now, then, perceive the meaning of the Prophet; he, in short, intimates that people had been destroyed because they sought falsehoods, while the false prophets vainly flattered them; for they would have in due time escaped so great evils, had the prophets boldly exhorted the people to repentance.^{F41}

He then adds, *And they saw for thee prophecies of vanity and expulsions.* Though the word מִשָּׂאָה, *meshat*, is often taken in a bad sense for a burden, that is, a hard prophecy which shews that God's vengeance is nigh, yet it is doubtful whether the Prophet takes it now in this sense, since he speaks of prophecies which gave hope of impunity to the people; and these were not מִשָּׂאוֹת, *meshaut*, that is, they were not grievous and dreadful prophecies. But when all things are well considered, it will be evident that Jeremiah did not without reason adopt this word; for he afterwards adds an explanation. The word, מִשָּׂאָה, *meshae*, is indeed taken sometimes as meaning any kind of prophecy, but it properly means what is comminatory. But now, what does Jeremiah say? *They saw for thee burdens* which thou hast escaped. For to render odious the doctrine of the holy man, they called whatever he taught, according to a proverbial saying, a burden. Thus, then, they created a prejudice against the holy man by saying that all his prophecies contained nothing but terror and trouble. Now, by way of concession, the Prophet says, "They themselves have indeed been prophets to you, and they saw, but saw at length burdens."

While, then, the false prophets promised impunity to the people, they were flatterers, and no burden appeared, that is, no trouble; but these prophecies became at length much more grievous than all the threatenings with which Jeremiah had terrified them; and corresponding with this view is what immediately follows, *expulsions*. For the Prophet, I doubt not, shews here what fruit the vain flatteries by which the people had chosen to be deluded had produced: for hence it happened, that they had been expelled from their country and driven into exile. For if the reason was asked, why the people had been deprived of their own inheritance, the obvious answer would have been this, because they had chosen to be deceived, because they had hardened themselves in obstinacy by means of falsehoods and vain promises. Since, then, their exile was the fruit of false doctrine, Jeremiah says now that these impostors saw burdens of vanity, but which at length brought burdens; and then they saw, מְדוּחִים, *meduchim*,^{F42} expulsions, even those things which had been the causes of expulsion or exile.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that though thou chastisest us as we deserve, we may yet never have the light of truth extinguished among us, but may ever see, even in darkness, at least some sparks, which may enable us to behold thy paternal goodness and mercy, so that we may especially be humbled under thy mighty hand, and that being really prostrate through a deep feeling of repentance, we may raise our hopes to heaven, and never doubt but that thou wilt at length be reconciled to us when we seek thee in thine only-begotten Son. — Amen.

LECTURE SEVENTH.

<250215> Lamentations 2:15

15. All that pass by clap *their* hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem *saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?*

15. Plauserunt super te manibus suis (*id est*, comploserunt manus suas) omnes transcuntes per viam, sibilarunt, et moverunt caput suum super filia Jerusalem, An haec urbs de qua dixcrunt, perfecta decore, gaudium totius terrae?

The Prophet here reminds the Jews of the miseries by which they had been already in an extreme measure afflicted, so that these words seem redundant and somewhat unkind; for unseasonable is reproof when one lies down, as it were, worn out with evils. As this was the condition of the people, the Prophet ought not to have made more bitter their grief. But we have already referred to the reason for this, even because the Jews, though they mourned and were extremely sorrowful in their calamities, did not yet consider whence their evils came. It was therefore necessary that they should be more and more awakened; for it is but of little profit for any one to suffer evils, except he has regard to God's judgment. We hence perceive the design of the Prophet, why he so much at large speaks of the miseries which were seen by all, and could not escape the notice of the Jews, who were almost overwhelmed with them; for it was not enough for them to feel their miseries, except they also considered the cause of them.

He then says, *All who have passed by clapped their hands and hissed and moved the head*, either in token of mockery, or of abhorrence, which is more probable. He then says, that they *moved* or *shook the head at the daughter of Jerusalem*,^{F43} *Is this the city of which they said, It is perfect in beauty, and the joy of the whole earth?* I know not why some render כָּלִיל, *calibat*, a crown; it comes, as it is well known, from כָּלָל *calal*, which means fullness, or anything solid. He then says, that Jerusalem had been *perfect in beauty*, because God had adorned it with singular gifts; he had especially favored it with the incomparable honor of being called by his name. Hence Jerusalem was in a manner the earthly palace of God, that

is, on account of the Temple; and further, it was there that the doctrine of salvation was to be found; and remarkable was this promise,

“From Sion shall go forth the law,
and rite word of God from Jerusalem.” (<230203> Isaiah 2:3.)

God had also promised to Ezekiel, that this city would be the fountain and origin of salvation to the whole world. (<264701> Ezekiel 47:1-12.) As, then, Jerusalem had been adorned with so remarkable gifts, the Prophet introduces here strangers, who ask, “Could it be that a city so celebrated for beauty had become a desolation?”

He calls it also *the joy of the whole earth*; for God had poured there his gifts so liberally, that it was a cause of joy to all. For we delight in beautiful things; and wherever God’s gifts appear, we ought to have our hearts filled with joy. Some give a more refined explanation — that Jerusalem had been the joy of the whole earth, because men have no peace except God be propitious to them; and there God had deposited the testimony and pledge of his favor: and thus Jerusalem made glad the whole world, because it invited all nations to God. This, at the first view, is plausible; but it seems to me more refined than solid. I am, therefore, content with this simple view, that Jerusalem was the joy of the whole earth, because God had designed that his favor should appear there, which might justly excite the whole world to rejoice. ^{F44} It afterwards follows, —

<250216> Lamentations 2:16	
16. All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee; they hiss and gnash the teeth: they say, We have swallowed <i>her</i> up: certainly this <i>is</i> the day that we looked for; we have found, we Have seen <i>it</i> .	16. Aperuerunt ^{F45} super te os suum cuncti hostes tui, sibilauerunt et frenduerunt dente (<i>vel</i> , dentibus;) dixerunt, Devorabimus; utique hic dies quem expectavimus; invenimus, vidimus.

Here, also, the Prophet introduces enemies as insolently exulting over the miseries of the people. He first says, that they had opened the mouth, even that they might loudly upbraid them; for he is not said to open the mouth who only speaks, but who insolently and freely utters his

calumnies. God is, indeed, sometimes said emphatically to open his mouth, when he announces something that deserves special notice; and so Matthew says, that Christ opened his mouth when he spoke of true happiness. (<400502> Matthew 5:2.) But in this place and in others the enemy is said to open his mouth, who, with a full mouth, so to speak, taunts him whom he sees worn out with evils. Hence, he refers to petulance or insolence, when he says, that enemies had *opened their mouth*.

He then adds, that they had *hissed*. By hissing he no doubt means scoffing or taunting; for it immediately follows, that they had *gnashed with their teeth*, as though he had said, that enemies not only blamed and condemned them, but had also given tokens of extreme hatred; for he who gnashes with his teeth thus shews the bitterness of his mind, and even fury; for to gnash the teeth is what belongs to a wild beast. The Prophet then says, that enemies had not only harassed the people with taunts and scoffs, but had also cruelly and even furiously treated them. Now we know that to men of ingenuous minds, such a treatment is harder than death itself: for it is deemed by many a hard thing to fall in battle — and we see how men of war expose themselves to the greatest danger; but a disgraceful death is far more bitter. The Prophet, then, no doubt, amplifies the miseries of the people by this circumstance, that they had been harassed on every side by taunts. And he mentions this on purpose, because reproofs by the prophets had not been received by them; for we know how perversely the Jews had rebelled against the prophets, when they reproved them in God's name. As, then, they would not have borne the paternal reproofs of God, they were thus constrained to bear the reproaches of enemies, and to receive the just reward of their pride and presumption. Nor is there a doubt, as I have said, but that the Prophet related reproaches of this kind, and the scoffs of enemies, that the people might at length know that they had been exposed to such evils, because they had proudly rejected the reproofs given them by the prophets.

He says, that enemies spoke thus, *We have devoured; surely this is the day which we have expected*; as though they triumphed when they saw that they got the victory, and that they could do with the people as they pleased. And as I have said, this in itself was a very bitter thing to the people; but, when the Prophet related, as in the person of the enemies, what was already sufficiently known to them, the people ought to have

called to mind the reason why they had been so severely afflicted; and this is what the Prophet clearly sets forth in the next verse; for he, adds, —

<div><250217> Lamentations 2:17</div>	
17. The Lord hath done that which he had devised; he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old: he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied: and he hath caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee; he hath set up the horn of thine adversaries.	17. Fecit Jehova quod cogitaverat, complevit sermonem suum quam praeceperat a diebus anitiquis: diruit (vel, evertit) et non perpercit; et exhilaravit super te inimicum, et extulit corum hostium tuorum.

Had the Prophet related only the boastings of enemies, the people would have probably become more hardened in their sorrow. But now, on the other hand, he assumes a different character. After having represented how insolently the enemies conducted themselves, he now says, *Jehovah hath done what he had determined*; and thus from the taunts of enemies he calls the attention of the people to the judgment of God. For when enemies insult us, we: indeed feel hurt, but afterwards grief in a manner blunts our feelings. Our best remedy then is, not to have our thoughts fixed on the insolence of men, but to know what the Scripture often reminds us, that the wicked are the scourges of God by which he chastises us. This, then, is the subject which the Prophet now handles. He says that God had *done*, etc.; as though he had said, that however enemies might exceed moderation, yet if the people attended to God there was a just cause why they should humble themselves.

He says, first, that *Jehovah had done what he had determined*: for the word to *think* is improperly applied to God, but yet it is often done, as we have before seen. He then says, that he *had fulfilled the word* which he had formerly commanded; for had the Prophet touched only on the secret counsel of God, the Jews might have been in doubt as to what it was. And certainly, as our minds cannot penetrate into that deep abyss, in vain would he have spoken of the hidden judgments of God. It was therefore necessary to come down to the doctrine, by which God, as far as :it is expedient, manifests to us what would otherwise be not only hidden, but also incomprehensible; for were we to inquire into God’s judgments, we

should sink into the deep. But when we direct our minds to what God has taught us, we find that he reveals to us whatever is necessary to be known; and though even by his word, we cannot perfectly know his hidden judgments. yet we may know them in part, and as I have said, as far as it is expedient for us. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet, after having spoken of God's counsels and decrees, adds *the word*.

Let us then hold to this rule, even to seek from the Law and the Prophets, and the Gospel, whatever we desire to know respecting the secret judgments of God; for, were we to turn aside, even in the smallest degree, from what is taught us, the immensity of God's glory would immediately swallow up all our thoughts; and experience sufficiently teaches us, that nothing is more dangerous and even fatal than to allow ourselves more liberty in this respect than what behooves us. Let us then learn to bridle all curiosity when we speak of God's secret judgments, and instantly to direct our minds to the word itself, that they may be in a manner enclosed there. Moreover, the Prophet was also able, in this manner, more easily to check whatever the Jews might have been otherwise ready to object: for we know that they were always wont to murmur, and that as soon as the prophets spake, they brought forward many exceptions, by which they attempted to confute their doctrine.

As, then, they were an unteachable people, Jeremiah did not only speak of God's hidden judgments, of which some doubt might have been alleged; but, in order to cut off every occasion for disputes and contentions, he mentioned *the word* itself; and thus he held the Jews as it were convicted; for, as it is said by Moses, they could not have objected and said,

“Who shall ascend into heaven? who shall descend into the deep?
who shall pass over the sea?” (<053012> Deuteronomy 30:12-14;)

for in their mouth was God's word, that is, God had sufficiently made known his judgments, so that they could not complain of obscurity. We now then perceive another reason why the Prophet joined the word to God's judgments and decrees or counsel.

But he says that this *word* had been published *from ancient days*, and here he touches on the untameable obstinacy of the people; for had they been admonished a few days or a short time before, they might have expostulated with God; and there might have been some specious

appearance that God had as it were made too great haste in his rigor. But as prophets had been sent, one after another, and as he had not ceased for many years, nay, for many ages, to exhort them to repentance, and to threaten them also that they might repent, hence their inveterate impiety more fully betrayed itself. This is the reason why the Prophet now mentions the *ancient days*, in which God had published his word.

He at length adds, *he hath subverted and not spared*. He does not here charge God with too much rigor, but rather he reproves the Jews, so that from the grievousness of their punishment they might know how intolerable had been their iniquity. He would then have them to judge of their sins by their punishment, for God does not act unjustly towards men. It hence follows, that when we are severely afflicted by his hand, it is a proof that we have been very wicked.

He then concludes that it was God who had *exhilarated their enemies, and raised up their horn*.^{F46} By these words. he confirms the doctrine, on which I have already touched, that we ought to turn our eyes to God, when men are insolent to us ,and exult over our miseries; for such a reproach might otherwise wholly overwhelm us. But when we consider that we are chastised by God, and that the wicked, however petulantly they may treat us, are yet God’s scourges, then we resolve with calm and resigned minds to bear what would otherwise wear us out by its acerbity. It follows, —

<250218> Lamentations 2:18	
18. Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease.	18. Clamavit cor eorum ad Dominum; Mure filiae Sion, deducas tanquam fluvium lachrymas (vel, tanquam fluvius) die et nocte; ne des requiem Tibi, ne silcat (hoc est, ne quiescat) pupilla oculi tui.

He means not that their *heart* really *cried to God*, for there was no cry in their heart; but by this expression he sets forth the vehemence of their grief, as though he had said, that the heart of the people was oppressed with so much sorrow, that their feelings burst forth into crying; for crying arises from extreme grief, and when any one cries or weeps, he has no

control over himself. Silence is a token of patience; but when grief overcomes one, he, as though forgetting himself, necessarily bursts out into crying. This is the reason why he says that their *heart cried to Jehovah*.

But we must observe, that the piety of the people is not here commended, as though they complained of their evils to God in sincerity and with an honest heart: on the contrary, the Prophet means that it was a common cry, often uttered even by the reprobate; for nature in a manner teaches this, that we ought to flee to God when oppressed by evils; and even those who have no fear of God exclaim in their extreme miseries, “God be merciful to us.” And, as I have said, such a cry does not flow from a right feeling or from the true fear of God, but from the strong and turbid impulse of nature: and thus God has from the beginning rendered all mortals inexcusable. So, then, now the Prophet says, that the Jews *cried* to God, or that *their heart cried*; not that they looked to God as they ought to have done, or that they deposited with him their sorrows and cast them into his bosom, as the Prophet encourages us to do; but because they found no remedy in the world — for as long as men find any comfort or help in the world, with that they are satisfied. Whence, then, was this crying to God? even because the world offered them nothing in which they could acquiesce; for it is indigenous, as it were, in our nature (that is, corrupt nature) to look around here and there, when any evil oppresses us. Now, when we find, as I have said, anything as a help, even an empty specter, to that we cleave, and never raise up our eyes to God. But when necessity forces us, then we begin to cry to God. Then the Prophet means that the people had been reduced to the greatest straits, when he says that their *heart cried to God*.

He afterwards turns to the *wall* of Jerusalem, and ascribes understanding to an inanimate thing. *O wall* of Jerusalem, he says, *draw down tears as though thou wert a river*; or, as a river; for both meanings may be admitted. But by stating a part for the whole, he includes under the word *wall*, the whole city, as it is well known. And yet there is still a personification, for neither houses, nor walls, nor gates, nor streets, could shed tears; but Jeremiah could not, except by this hyperbolical language, sufficiently express the extent of their cry. This was the reason why he addressed the very *wall* of the city, and bade it *to shed tears like a river*.^{F47}

There seems to be some allusion to the ruins; for the walls of the city had been broken down as though they were melted. And then the Prophet seems to allude to the previous hardness of the people, for their hearts had been extremely stupified. As, then, they never had been flexible, whether addressed by doctrine, or exhortations, or threatenings, he now by implication brings forward in contrast with them the walls of the city, as though he had said, “Hitherto no one of God’s servants could draw even one tear from your eyes, so great was your hardness; but now the very walls weep, for they dissolve, as though they would send forth rivers of waters. Therefore the very stones turn to tears, because ye have hitherto been hardened against God and all prophetic instruction.”

He afterwards adds, *Spare not thyself, give not thyself rest day or night, and let not the daughter of thine eye*, or the pupil of thine eye, *cease*, literally, be silent; but to be silent is metaphorically taken in the sense of ceasing or resting. He intimates that there would be, nay, that there was now, an occasion of continual lamentation; and hence he exhorted them to weep day and night; as though he had said, that sorrow would continue without intermission, as there would be no relaxation as to their evils. But we must bear in mind what we have before said, that the Prophet did not speak thus to embitter the sorrow of the people. We indeed know that the minds of men are very tender and delicate while under evils, and then that they rush headlong into impatience; but as they were not as yet led to true repentance, he sets before them the punishment which God had inflicted, that they might thereby be turned to consider their own sins. It follows, —

<250219> **Lamentations 2:19**

19. Arise, cry out in the night; in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street.

19. Surge, Clama nocte principio excubiarum (custodiarum ad verbum, sed significat vigilias nocturnas;) effunde tanquam aquas cor tuum coram facie Domini; attolle ad ipsum manus tuas propter Animam parvulorum tuorum, qui deficiunt fame in capite omnium compitorum.

The Prophet now explains himself more clearly, and confirms what I have lately said, that he mentioned not the calamities of the people except for this end, that those who were almost stupid might begin to raise up their eyes to God, and also to examine their life, and willingly to condemn themselves, that thus they might escape from the wrath of God.

The Prophet then bids them to *rise* and *to cry*. Doubtless they had been by force constrained by their enemies to undertake a long journey: why then does he bid them to rise, who had become fugitives from their own country, and had been driven away like sheep? He regards, as I have said, the slothfulness of their minds, because they were still lying torpid in their sins. It was then necessary to rouse them from this insensibility; and this is what the Prophet had in view by saying, *Rise*.^{F48} And then he bids them to *cry at the beginning of the watches*, even when sleep begins to creep on, and the time is quieter; for when men go to bed, then sleep comes on, and that is the main rest. ut the Prophet bids here the Jews to cry, and in their uneasiness to utter their complaints at the very time when others take their rest. et he did not wish them heedlessly to pour forth into the air their wailings, but bade them to present their prayers to God. hen as to the circumstances of that time, he repeats what we have already seen, that so great was their mass of evils, that it allowed the people no relaxation; in short, he intimates that it was a continual sorrow.

But, as I have said, he would have the Jews not simply to cry, but after having exhorted them to *pour out their hearts like waters*, he adds, *before the face of Jehovah*. For the unbelieving make themselves almost hoarse by crying, but they are only like brute beasts; or if they call on God's name, they do this, as it has been said, through a rash and indiscriminate impulse. Hence the Prophet here makes a difference between the elect of God and the reprobate, when he bids them to pour forth their hearts and their cries *before* God, so as to seek alleviation from him, which could not have been done, were they not convinced that he was the author of all their calamities; and hence, also, arises repentance, for there is a mutual relation between God's judgment and men's sins. Whosoever, then, acknowledges God as a judge, is at the same time compelled to examine himself and to inquire as to his own sins. We now understand the meaning of the Prophet's words.

For the same purpose he adds, *Raise up to him thy hands*. This practice of itself is, indeed, not sufficient; but the Scripture often points out the real thing by external signs. Then the elevation of the hands, in this place and others, means the same thing as prayer; and it has been usual in all ages to raise up the hands to heaven, and the expression often occurs in the Psalms, (^{<192802>} Psalm 28:2; ^{<19D402>} Psalm 134:2;) and when Paul bids prayers to be made everywhere, he says,

“I would have men to raise up pure hands without contention.”
(^{<540208>} 1 Timothy 2:8.)

God has no doubt suggested this practice to men, that they may first go beyond the whole world when they seek him; and, secondly, that they may thus stimulate themselves to entertain confidence, and also to divest themselves of all earthly desires; for except this practice were to raise up our minds, (as we are by nature inclined to superstition,) every one would seek God either at his feet or by his side. Then God has planted in men this feeling, even to raise upwards their hands, in order that they may go, as I have said, beyond the whole world, and that having thus divested themselves of all vain superstition, they may ascend above the heavens. This custom, I allow, is indeed common among the unbelieving; and thus all excuse has been taken away from them. Though, then, the unbelieving have been imbued with gross and delirious fantasies, so as to connect God with statues and pictures, yet this habit of raising up the hands to heaven ought to have been sufficient to confute all their erroneous notions. But it would not be enough to seek God beyond this world, so that no superstition should possess our minds, except our minds were also freed from all worldly desires. For we are held entangled in our lusts, and then we seek what pleases the flesh, and thus, for the most part, men strive, to subject God to themselves. Then the elevation of the hands does also shew that we are to deny ourselves, and to go forth, as it were, out of ourselves whenever we call on God. These are briefly the things which may be said of the use of this ceremony or practice.

But we must remember what I have referred to, that the Prophet designates the thing itself by an outward sign, when he bids them to *raise up the hands* to God. He afterwards shews the necessity of this, *because of the soul of thy little ones, who faint in famine*; ^{F49} but the □, *beth*, is redundant here, — *who*, then, *through famine faint* or fail, and that openly.

For it might have happened that those who had no food pined away at home, and thus fainted because no one gave them aid, because their want was not known. But when infants in public places breathed out their souls through famine, hence was evident that extreme state of despair, which the Prophet intended here to set forth by mentioning *at the head of all the streets*. It follows, —

<250220> Lamentations 2:20	
20. Behold, O Lord, and consider to whom thou hast done this. Shall the women eat their fruit, and children of a span long? Shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?	20. Vide, Jehova, et aspice cui feceris sic; an comedent mulieres fructum suum (hoc est, foetus suos,) parvulos educationis? An occidetur in sanctuario Domini sacerdos et propheta?

Here, also, Jeremiah dictates words, or a form of prayer to the Jews. And this complaint availed to excite pity, that God had thus afflicted, not strangers, but the people whom he had adopted. Interpreters do, indeed, give another explanation, “See, Jehovah, To whom hast thou done this?” that is, Has any people been ever so severely afflicted? But I do not think that the comparison is made here, which they seek to make, but that the people only set before God the covenant which he had made with their fathers, as though they said, “O Lord, hadst thou thus cruelly raged against strangers, there would have been nothing so wonderful; but since we are thine heritage, and the blessed seed of Abraham, since thou hast been pleased to choose us as thy peculiar people, what can this mean, that, thou treatest us with so much severity?”

We now, then, perceive the real meaning of the Prophet, when, in the person of the people, he speaks thus, *See, and look on, Jehovah, to whom thou hast done this*; for thou hast had to do with thy children: not that the Jews could allege any worthiness; but the gratuitous election of God must have been abundantly sufficient to draw forth mercy. Nor do the faithful here simply ask God to see, but they add another word, *Look on*. By the two words they more fully express the indignity of what had happened, as though they said, that it was like a prodigy that God’s people should be so

severely afflicted, who had been chosen by him: *see, then, to whom thou hast done this.*

And this mode of praying was very common, as we find it said in the Psalms,

“Pour forth thy wrath on the nations which know not thee, and on the kingdoms which call not on thy name.” (<197906> Psalm 79:6.)

And a similar passage we have before observed in our Prophet. (<241025> Jeremiah 10:25.) The sum of what is said is, that there was a just reason why God should turn to mercy, and be thus reconciled to his people, because he had not to do with aliens, but with his own family, whom he had been pleased to adopt. But the rest I shall defer until tomorrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thy Church at this day is oppressed with many evils, we may learn to raise up not only our eyes and our hands to thee, but also our hearts, and that we may so fix our attention on thee as to look for salvation from thee alone; and that though despair may overwhelm us on earth, yet the hope of thy goodness may ever shine on us from heaven, and that, relying on the Mediator whom thou hast given us, we may not hesitate to cry continually to thee, until we really find by experience that our prayers have not been ill vain, when thou, pitying thy Church, hast extended thy hand, and given us cause to rejoice, and hast turned our mourning into joy, through Christ our Lord. — Amen.

LECTURE EIGHTH

We explained yesterday the complaint of the Prophet, when he set before God his own covenant. For it might have appeared unreasonable that God should deal with so much severity with the Church which he had adopted. Hence the Prophet said, *See, Jehovah, to whom thou hast done this*. He now mentions some things calculated to produce horror, and thus to obtain pardon from God, *Should women eat their own fruit?* that is, their own foetus, *the infants of nursings?* This, as I have said, was a horrible thing: for we see that mothers often forget their own life in their concern for the safety of their infants. That a child, then, should be devoured by its mother, was a most abominable thing; and yet we know that it was done. It hence appears, that; the Israelites, when blinded by God, had fallen into this barbarity: for it happened in the siege of Samaria, as sacred history declares; and the Prophet now mentions the same thing as having taken place in his time, and he repeats the same in the fourth chapter. And Josephus also says, that when the city was besieged by Titus, the state of things was such, that mothers agreed to eat their own children, and that they cast lots who should first slay their child, and that they stole a leg or an arm from one another. Though it was so inhuman a thing, yet the Prophet seeks to turn God to mercy by adducing so great; an enormity. He then says, that it was by no means right, that *mothers should eat their own children, the children of nursings*, or nurturings.^{F50}

He afterwards adds, *Should the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?* This was another indignity, by which he sought to lead God to shew mercy. We indeed know that the priests and the prophets were deemed sacred; and in the Psalms, where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are referred to, God, in order to shew how much they were to be regarded, says,

“Touch not my Christ’s, and to my prophets do no harm.”
(^{<19A515>}Psalm 105:15.)

As, then, the priests and the prophets were especially under the protection of God, what is here said was an intolerable atrocity. But when the profanation of the Temple was added, it was still a greater prodigy.

Jeremiah then complains, not only that the priests and the prophets were slain, but that they were slain in the sanctuary. It now follows, —

<250221> **Lamentations 2:21**

21. The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets: my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword; thou hast slain them in the day of thine anger; thou hast killed, and not pitied.

21. Jacuerunt in terra per compita puer et senex; virgines meae et adolescentes mei ceciderunt gladio; occidisti in die irae tuae; mactasti et non pepercisti.

Here he relates in the person of the Church another calamity, that the young and the aged were lying prostrate in the streets; and he joins children to the old men, to shew that there was no difference as to age. Then he says that dead bodies were lying promiscuously in public places. He adds, that *virgins* and *young men* had *fallen by the sword*; by which he confirms the previous clause, for there is nothing new said here, but only the manner is shewn by which they had been slain; for slain by the sword had been the young men and young women without any distinction; the enemies at the same time had not spared the old, while they killed the very flower of the people.

But the Prophet at the same time shews that all this was to be ascribed to God, not. that the Jews might expostulate with him, but that they might cease vainly to lament their calamities, and in order that they might on the contrary turn to God. Hence he does not say that the young and the old had been slain by the enemies, but by God himself. But it was difficult to convince the Jews of this, for they were so filled with rage against their enemies, that they could not turn their thoughts to the consideration of God's judgments. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet makes God the author of all their calamities; *Thou*, he says, *hast slain in the day of thy wrath; thou hast killed and not spared*. And though the people seem here in a manner to contend with God, we must yet bear in mind the design of the Prophet, even to teach the people to look to God himself, so that they might know that they had to do with him. For there ought to be a passing from one truth to another, so that men, conscious of their sins, should first

give glory to God, and then humbly deprecate the wrath which they have deserved. It follows at length, —

<div><250222> Lamentations 2:22</div>	
22. Thou hast called, as in a solemn day, my terrors round about; so that in the day of the Lord's anger none escaped nor remained: those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed.	22. Vocasti tanquam ad diem festum terrores meos undique, et nou fuit in die indignationis Jehovae superstes ac residuus; quos enutrivisti et educavi, hostis meus consumpsit eos (sed abundat relativum.)

Here he uses a most appropriate metaphor, to show that the people had been brought to the narrowest straits; for he says that *terrors* had on every side surrounded them, as when a solemn assembly is called. They sounded the trumpets when a festival was at hand, that all might come up to the Temple. As, then, many companies were wont to come to Jerusalem on feast-days — for when the trumpets were sounded all were called — so the Prophet says that terrors had been sent by God from every part to straiten the miserable people: *thou hast, then, called my terrors all around*, — how? *as to a feast-day*, the day of the assembly; for מועד, *muod*, means the assembly as well as the place and the appointed time. ^{F51}

But we must ever bear in mind what I have already referred to, that though enemies terrified the Jews, yet this was to be ascribed to God, so that every one might acknowledge for himself, that the Chaldeans had not come by chance, but through the secret impulse of God. He afterwards adds, *in the day of Jehovah's wrath* (he changes the person) *there was none alive*, or remaining; nay, he says *the enemy has consumed those whom I had nursed and brought up*. Here he transfers to enemies what he had before said was done by God, but in this sense, that he understood God as the chief author, and the Chaldeans as the ministers; of his vengeance. Now follows, —

CHAPTER 3

<250301> Lamentations 3:1

1. I *am* the man *that* hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.

1. Ego vir videns afflictionem in virga Indignationis ejus.

The word, עברה *obere*, properly means assault, passing over limits; but what is peculiar to man is often in Scripture ascribed to God. Here also he changes the person, for he spoke before of the people under the person of a woman, as it is often done; but now the Prophet himself comes before us. At the same time there is no doubt but that by his own example he exhorted all others to lamentation, which was to be connected with true repentance. And this chapter, as we shall see, is full of rich instruction, for it contains remarkable sentiments which we shall consider in their proper places.

Some think that this Lamentation was written by Jeremiah when he was cast into prison; but this opinion seems not probable to me; and the contents of the chapter sufficiently shew that this ode was composed to set forth the common calamity of the whole people. Jeremiah, then, does not here plead his own private cause, but shews to his own nation what remedy there was for them in such a state of despair, even to have an immediate recourse to God, and on the one hand to consider their sins, and on the other to look to the mercy of God, so that they might entertain hope, and exercise themselves in prayer. All these things we shall see in their due order.

The Prophet then says that he was an *afflicted man*, or a man who saw affliction. This mode of speaking, we know, is common in Scripture — to see affliction — to see good and evil — to see life and death. He then says that he had *experienced* many afflictions, and not only so, but that he had been given up as it were to miseries, — how? *by the rod of his fury*. He does not mention the name of God, but Jeremiah speaks of him as of one well known, using only a pronoun. Now, then, at the very beginning, he acknowledges that whatever he suffered had been inflicted by God's hand. And as all the godly ought to be convinced of this, that God is never angry

without just reasons, there is included in the word *wrath* a brief confession, especially when it is added, *by the rod*, or staff. In short, the Prophet says that he was very miserable, and he also expresses the cause, for he had been severely chastised by an angry God.

<250302>Lamentations 3:2	
2. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light.	2. Me deduxit et proficisci fecit in tenebras, et non in lucem.

The letters of the alphabet are tripled in this chapter, which I had omitted to mention. In the first two chapters each verse begins with the successive letters of the alphabet, except that in the last chapter there is one instance of inversion, for Jeremiah has put פ, *phi*, before ו, *oin*; or it may be that the order has been changed by the scribes; but this is uncertain. Here then, as I have said, each letter is thrice repeated. Then the first, the second, and the third verse begins with א *aleph*; and the fourth begins with ב, *beth*, and so he goes on to the end. ^{F52}

He confirms here the last verse, for he shews the cause or the manner of his afflictions, for he had been led into darkness and not into light. This kind of contrast has not the same force in other languages as it has in Hebrew. But when the Hebrews said that they were in darkness and not in the light, they amplified that obscurity, as though they had said that there was not even a spark of light in that darkness, it being so thick and obscure. This is what the Prophet now means. And we know what is everywhere understood in Scripture by darkness, even every kind of Lamentation: for the appearance of light exhilarates us, yea, the serenity of heaven cheers and revives the minds of men. Then darkness signifies all sorts of adversities and the sorrow which proceeds from them. He afterwards adds, —

<250303>Lamentations 3:3	
3. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me the day.	3. Utique contra me vertetur, convertet marrum suam quotidie (vel, toro die, quatenus in duobus verbis videtur futurum tempus debere resolvi in aliquid praeteritum, vel saltem Propheta actum continuum, designat, ut soepe fieri solet.)

Now he says that *God was an adversary to him*; for this is what the verb **יָשֵׁב**, *isheb*, means, he is turned against me. As an enemy, when intending to fight, comes to meet one from the opposite side, so the Prophet says of God, who had become an enemy to him; and he teaches the same thing in another way when he says that he perceived that the hand of God was against him: *He turns*, he says, *against me his hand daily*, or all the day, **כָּל-הַיּוֹם**, *cal-eium*. But the Prophet simply means constancy, as though he had said that there was no truce, no cessation, because God manifested the rigor of his vengeance without limit or end. He afterwards adds, —

<250304> Lamentations 3:4

4. My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones.

4. Senio confecit eam et ossa mea
(senescere fecit, *ad verbum*) et pellem
meam (*vel*, cutem;) confregit ossa mea.

These, as it evidently appears, are metaphorical words. Illness often makes people to look old, for from pain proceeds leanness: thus the skin is contracted, and the wrinkles of old age appear even in youths. As, then, sorrows exhaust moisture and strength, hence he is said to grow old who pines away in mourning. This is what the Prophet now means. *God*, he says, *has made my flesh and my skin, to grow old*, that is, he hath worn me out, within and without, so that I am almost wasted away.

He then adds, *He hath broken my bones*. This seems to be hyperbolical; but we have said elsewhere that this simile does not in every instance express the greatness of the sorrow which the faithful feel under a sense of God's wrath. Both David and Hezekiah spoke in this way; nay, Hezekiah compares God to a lion,

“As a lion,” he says, “has he broken my bones.”
(**<233802>** Isaiah 38:23.)

And David says at one time that his bones wasted away, at another that they were broken, and at another that they were reduced to ashes; for there is nothing more dreadful than to feel that God is angry with us. The Prophet, then, did not only regard outward calamities, but the evidence of God's vengeance; for the people could see nothing else in their distresses

except that God was their enemy — and this was true; for God had often exhorted them to repentance; but upon those whom he had found incurable, he at length, as it was just, poured forth his vengeance to the uttermost. This, then, was the reason why the Prophet said, that God had broken his bones. He then adds, —

<250305>Lamentations 3:5	
5. He hath builded against me, and encompassed me with gall and travail.	5. AEdificavit contra me, et circumdedit felle et molestia.

The words, as translated, may seem harsh, yet they have no common beauty in Hebrew. The Prophet says he was blocked up and straitened as it were by walls; and as we shall see, he repeats this comparison three times; in other words, indeed, but for the same purpose.

God, he says, *hath built against me*, as, when we wish to besiege any one, we build mounds, so that there may be no escape. This, then, is the sort of building of which the Prophet now speaks: God, he says, holds me confined all around, so that there is no way of escape open to me.

He then gives a clearer explanation, that he was surrounded by gall ^{F53} or poison and trouble. He mentions poison first, and then, without a figure, he shews what that poison was, even that he was afflicted with many troubles. He afterwards adds, —

<250306>Lamentations 3:6	
6. He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old.	6. In tenebris jacere me fecit tanquam mortuos seculi.

Here he amplifies what he had before said of poison and trouble; he says that he was placed in darkness, not that he might be there for a little while, but remain there for a long time; he hath made me, he says, to dwell in darkness. But the comparison which follows more clearly explains the Prophet’s meaning, as the dead of ages. The word עולם, *oulam*, may refer to future or past time. Some say, as *the dead for ever*, who are perpetually dead. But the Scripture elsewhere calls those *the dead of ages* who have been long buried, and have decayed, and whose memory has become nearly

extinct. For as long as the dead body retains its form, it seems more like a living being; but when it is reduced to ashes, when no bone appears, when the whole skin and nerves and blood have perished, and no likeness to man remains, there can then be no hope of life. The Scripture then calls those the dead of ages, who have wholly decayed. So also in this place the Prophet says, that he dwelt in darkness, into which he had been cast by God's hand, and that he dwelt there as though he had been long dead, and his body had become now putrid.

This way of speaking appears indeed hyperbolical; but we must always remember what I have reminded you of, that it is not possible sufficiently to set forth the greatness of that sorrow which the faithful feel when terrified by the wrath of God. He then adds, —

<250307> Lamentations 3:7	
7. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out; he hath made my chain heavy.	7. Sepsit me, ut non egrediar; aggravavit compedem meum.

Here he says, first, that he was held *shut up*; for גִּדָּר, *gidar*, is to enclose, and גִּדָּרָה, *gidare*, means a fence or a mound, or an enclosure of any kind. He then says, that he was shut up as it were by a fence, so that he could not go forth; literally, it is, and *I shall not go forth*; but the conjunction here is to be taken as denoting the end. He has *shut me up*, he says, or he has enclosed me, that I might not get out.

It then follows, *He hath made heavy my fetter*. His meaning is, that he was not only bound with fetters, but so bound that he could not raise up his feet, as though he had said, that he not only had fetters, but that they were so heavy that he could not even move his feet.

<250308> Lamentations 3:8	
8. Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.	8. Etiam si clamem et vociferer, clausit precatorem meam (vel precatioi meae.)

The Prophet describes here the extremity of all evils, that it availed him nothing to cry and to pray. And yet we know that we are called to do this in all our miseries.

“The strongest tower is the name of the Lord, to it will the righteous flee and shall be safe.” (<201810> Proverbs 18:10.)

Again,

“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (<290232> Joel 2:32.)

And Scripture is full of testimonies of this kind; that is, that God graciously invites all the faithful to himself:

“He shall call upon me, and I will hear him.” (<199115> Psalm 91:15.)

“In the day when I call, answer me speedily.” (<19A202> Psalm 102:2.)

“Before they call, I will answer.” (<236524> Isaiah 65:24.)

In short, there is no need to collect all the passages; but we may be content with this one thing, that when God claims to himself this prerogative, that he answers prayers, he intimates that it is what cannot be separated from his eternal essence and godhead; that is, that he is ready to hear prayer. And hence the Psalmist concludes,

“To thee shall all flesh come.” (<196503> Psalm 65:3.)

When, therefore, Jeremiah complains that his prayers were in vain, and without any fruit or effect., it seems strange and inconsistent. But we know that God holds the faithful in suspense, and so hears as to prove and try their patience, sometimes for a long time. This is the reason why he defers and delays his aid.

It is no wonder, then, that God did not hear the prayers of his servant, that is, according to the judgment of the flesh. For God never rejects his own, nor is he deaf to their prayers and their sighs; but the faithful often speak according to what the flesh judges. As, then, the Prophet found that he obtained nothing by prayer, he says that his prayer was shut out, or that the door was closed against him, so that his prayer did not come to God.

Now, this passage is worthy of special notice; for except God immediately meets us, we become languid, and not only our ardor in prayer is cooled but almost extinguished. Let us, then, bear in mind, theft though God may not help us soon, yet our prayers are never repudiated by him; and since we see that the holy fathers experienced the same thing, let us not wonder, if the Lord at this day were to try our faith in the same manner. Let us, therefore, persevere hi calling on Him; and should there be a longer delay, and our complaint be that we are not heard, yet let us proceed in the same course, as we shall see the Prophet did. It follows, —

<250309> Lamentations 3:9	
9. He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stone; he hath made my paths crooked.	9. Sepivit (<i>idem est verbum quod ante vidimus</i>) vias meas lapide quadrato, semitas meas pervertit.

Other metaphors are used. Some think that the Prophet refers to the siege of Jerusalem, but such a view is not suitable. The metaphors correspond with one another, though they are somewhat different. He had said before, that he was enclosed by God, or surrounded as with a mound; and now he transfers this idea to his ways. When the life of man is spoken of, it is, we know, compared to a way. Then the Prophet includes under this word all the doings of his life, as though he had said, that all his plans were brought into straits, as though his way was shut up, so that he could not proceed: “Were I to proceed ill any direction, an obstacle is set before me; I am compelled to remain as it were fixed.” So the Prophet now says, his *ways were enclosed*, because God allowed none of His counsels or His purposes to be carried into effect.

And to the same purpose he adds, that. God had perverted his ways, that is, that he had confounded all his doings, and all his counsels.

But these words are added, *with a squared stone*. The verb גִּזַּז gizaz, means to cut; hence the word גִּזִּית gizit, signifies a polished stone, or one trimmed by the hammer. And we know that such stones are more durable and firmer than other stones. For when unpolished stones are used, the building is not so strong as when the stones are squared, as they fit together better. Then the Prophet intimates that the enclosures were such that he could by no means break through them, as they could not be

broken. he, in short, means that he was so oppressed by God's hand, that whatever he purposed God immediately reversed it. We now, then, perceive what he means by saying, that all his ways were subverted or overturned by God. ^{F54} This is not to be understood generally, for it is God who directs our ways. But he is said to pervert our ways, when he disconcerts our counsels, when all our purposes and efforts are rendered void; in a word, when God as it were meets us as an adversary, and impedes our course; it is then that he is said to pervert our ways. But this ought not to be understood as though God blinded men unjustly, or as though he led them astray. The Prophet only means that he could find no success in all his counsels, in all his efforts and doings, because he had God opposed to him. here I stop.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou didst in former times so severely chastise thy people, we may in the present day patiently submit to all thy scourges, and in a humble and meek spirit suffer ourselves to be chastised as we deserve; and that we may not, in the meantime, cease to call on thee, and that however slowly thou mayest seem to hear our prayers, we may yet persevere continually to the end, until at length we shall really find that salvation is not in vain promised to all those who in sincerity of heart call on thee, through Christ our Lord. — Amen.

LECTURE NINTH

<250310> Lamentations 3:10

10. He *was* unto me *as* a bear lying in wait, *and as* a lion in secret places.

10. Urus insidians fuit mihi (ipse mihi,) leo in latebris.

Harsh is the complaint when Jeremiah compares God to a bear and a lion. But we have said that the apprehension of God's wrath so terrified the faithful, that they could not sufficiently express the atrocity of their calamity; and then borne in mind must also be what we have stated, that they spoke according to the judgment of the flesh; for they did not always so moderate their feelings, but that something fell from them worthy of blame. We ought not, then, to make as a rule in religion all the complaints of holy men, when they were pressed down by the hand of God; for when their minds were in a state of confusion, they uttered much that was intemperate. But we ought, on the other hand, to acknowledge how great must be our weakness, since we see that even the strongest; have thus fallen, when God exercised severity towards them.

Though, then, it does not seem that it was said in due honor, that God did *lie in wait* as *bears* for travelers, or as lions in their dens; yet, if we consider how much the faithful dreaded the tokens of God's wrath, we shall not wonder at this excess. It is then certain that this Prophet brings before us here not only evidences of the fear of God, of religion and humility, but also of the corrupt feelings of the flesh; for it cannot be, but that the infirmity of men will betray itself in extreme evils. He adds, what is of the same import, —

<250311> Lamentations 3:11

11. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate.

11. Vias meas pervertit et scidit me (*vel*, dissipavit, *vel*, laceravit,) posuit me vastatam (*vel*, quasi vastitatem.)

In this verse also the Prophet shews how grievously the faithful are disturbed when they feel that God is adverse to them. But he uses the

same figure as yesterday, though the word סורר, *surer*, is different: what he used yesterday was עודה, *oue*, but in the same sense.

He then says that his ways had been perverted; ^{F55} and for this reason, because he had been disappointed in his purpose; whatever he did was made void, because God by force prevented him. When we undertake to do anything, a way is open to us; but when there is no success, our way is said to be perverted. And this is done by God, who has all events, prosperous as well as adverse, in his own hand. As, then, God directs our ways when he blesses our counsels and our actions; so, on the other hand, he perverts them, when all things turn out unsuccessfully, when our purpose is not done and events do not answer our expectations.

He afterwards adds, *He hath torn me* or broken me. The verb פשח, *peshech*, means properly to cut, but here to tear or scatter. It follows lastly, *he hath made me a waste*. In this expression he includes the other two things; for he who is reduced to desolation, does not hold on his way, nor find any exit; he is also drawn here and there, as though he was torn into several parts. We hence see that the Prophet here complains of extreme evils, for there was no hope of deliverance left. He adds, —

<250312> Lamentations 3:12	
12. He hath bent, his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow.	12. Extendit (<i>vel</i> , intendit) arcum suum, et statuit me quasi signum sagittae.

Here the Prophet introduces another metaphor, that God had shot him with arrows, as he was made a mark to them. Jeremiah has elsewhere often used the word מתרה, *methera*, for a prison; but here it means a mark at which arrows are leveled, and such is its meaning in ^{<181612>} Job 16:12, where there is a similar complaint made. The meaning is, that the people, in whose name Jeremiah speaks, had been like marks, because God had directed against them all his arrows. It is, indeed, a fearful thing when God aims at us, that he may discharge his darts and arrows in order to hit and wound us. But as God had so grievously afflicted his people, that he seemed to have poured forth all his vengeance, the Prophet justly complains that the people had been like marks for arrows.

<250313> Lamentations 3:13

13. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins.

13. Induxit in renes meos filion pharetrae sum (*id est, sagittas.*)

He goes on with the same metaphor; he said in the last verse that God had leveled his bow; he now adds, that his arrows had penetrated into his reins, that is, into his inward parts. But we must bear in mind what the Prophet meant, that God had dealt so severely with the people, that no part, even the innermost, was sound or untouched, for his arrows had perforated their very reins. He afterwards adds, —

<250314> Lamentations 3:14

14. I was a derision to all my people, *and* their song all the day.

14. Fui risus (*vel, ludibrium*) toti populo meo, pulsatio (*vel, canticum, quod pulsatur ab organo et instrumento musico*) quotidie (*vel, toto die.*)

The Prophet again complains of the reproaches to which God had exposed the Jews. We have said that of all evils the most grievous is reproach, and experience teaches us that sorrow is greatly embittered when scoffs and taunts are added to it; for he who silently bears the most grievous sorrows, becomes broken in heart when he finds himself contumeliously treated. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet again amplifies the miseries of the people, because they were exposed to the scoffs of all men. But it may seem a strange thing that the Jews were derided by their own people. This is the reason why some think that the Prophet complains of his own private evils, and that he does not represent the whole people or the public condition of the Church. But it may also be said in reply, that the Prophet does not mean that the people were derided by themselves, which could not be; but it is the same as though he had said, that their state was so disgraceful, that while they looked on one another, they had a reason for taunting, if this their condition was allowed to continue.

In short, the Prophet does not mean what was actually done, but he simply complains that their calamity was liable to all kinds of reproaches, so that any one looking on Jerusalem might justly deride such a disgraceful spectacle. And it was, as we have said, a most equitable reward, for they

had not ceased to reproach God. Then rendered to them was what they had deserved, when God loaded them in turn with dishonor.

He afterwards adds, that he was *their song*, that is, of derision; for it is a confirmation of the former clause, and the same complaint is also formal in Job. He says that he was their song *daily* or all the day. This constancy, as it has been said, proved more clearly the grievousness of the evil.

<250315> Lamentations 3:15	
15. He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood.	15. Satiavit me amaritudinibus, saturavit me felle.

Some render the last word “wormwood,” but this word seems not to me to suit the passage, for though wormwood is bitter, yet it is a wholesome herb. I therefore take it in this and like places for poison or gall; and שֶׁמֶץ, *rash*, as we shall see, is joined with it. To satiate, is also a metaphor very common. Then the Prophet means that lie was full of bitterness and gall; and lie thus had regard to those calamities from which so much sorrow had proceeded.

We hence also gather that the faithful were not free from sorrow in their evils, for bitterness and gall sufficiently shew that their minds were so disturbed that they did not bear their troubles with sufficient patience. But they struggled with their own infirmity, and the example is set before us that we may not despond when bitterness and gall lay hold on our minds; for since the same thing happened to the best servants of God, let us bear in mind our own infirmity, and at the same time flee to God. The unbelieving nourish their bitterness, for they do not unburden their souls into the bosom of God. But the best way of comfort is, when we do not flatter ourselves in our bitterness and grief, but seek the purifying of our souls, and in a manner lay them open, so that whatever bitter thing may be there, God may take it away and so feed us, as it is said elsewhere, with the sweetness of his goodness. He adds, —

<250316> **Lamentations 3:16**

16. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes.

16. Confregit (*vel*, contrivit) lapillo dentes meos, involvit me (foedavit me, *alii autem*, versavit) hi pulvere.

Many renderings are given of these words' there is, however, no over-statement here; for, as it has been often said, the grief of the people under such a mass of evils could not be sufficiently expressed. The Prophet, no doubt, extended here his hand to the weak, who would have otherwise lain down as dead; for under such evils the ruin of the whole nation, the fall of the city, and the destruction of the temple, it could not be but such thoughts as these must have occurred. Now, as to any one unacquainted with such a trial, he would soon succumb, had no remedy been presented to him. The Prophet then dictates for all the godly such complaints as they might, so to speak, pour forth confidently and freely into the bosom of God.

We hence see that here is even expressed whatever might occur to the minds of God's children, so that they might not hesitate in their straits to direct their prayers to God, and freely confess whatever they suffered in their souls. For shame closes up the door of access; and thus it happens; that we make a clamor as though God were far away from us; hence impatience breaks out almost to a rage. But when an access to God is opened to us, and we dare to confess what burdens our minds, this, as I have said, is the best way for obtaining relief and comfort. We must then understand the design of the Prophet, that he suggests words to the faithful, that they might freely cast their cares and sorrows on God, and thus find some alleviation.

For this reason, he says that his teeth had been broken by a little stone or pebble. ^{F56} The same expression, if I mistake not, is found in Job. It is a metaphor taken from those who press stones instead of bread under their teeth; for when grit lies hid in bread, it hurts the teeth. Then inward and hidden griefs are said to be like small stones, which break or shatter the teeth. For the Prophet does not speak here of large stones, but on the contrary he speaks of pebbles or small stones, which deceive men, for they lie hid either in bread or in meat, or in any other kind of food. As, then, the

teeth are hurt by pressing them, so the Prophet says that his sorrows were most bitter, as that part, as it is well known, is very tender; and when any injury is done to the teeth, the pain spreads instantly almost through the whole body. This is the reason why he says that his teeth were broken.

Then he adds, that he was *covered with dust*, or that he was lying down or dragged along in the dust. The expression is taken from those who are drawn by way of reproach along the ground, as a carcass is, or some filthy thing which we abhor. ^{F57} Thus the Prophet complains that there was nothing short of extreme evils. He adds, —

<250317> Lamentations 3:17

17. And thou hast removed my soul
far off from peace: I forgot prosperity.

17. Et remota fuit a pace
anima mea, oblitus sum boni.

By saying that his *soul was remote from peace*, he means that no good remained; for by peace, as it is well known, the Hebrews understood every kind of prosperity. And he explains himself by another clause, that, he had *forgotten every good*; and this forgetfulness ought to be understood, so to speak, as real or entire; for if there had been any reason for rejoicing, it would not have been forgotten; for all are naturally pleased with what is pleasant, nay, they with avidity seek what delights them. It would then be contrary to nature to forget things good and pleasant, to us. But the Prophet means here a privation. Hence the forgetfulness of which he speaks is nothing else but alienation from everything good, as though he had said (as the previous clause shews) that he was removed from every hope of peace.

But the expression is much more emphatical, when he says, that his soul was far removed from peace. By soul he does not mean himself only, (for that would be frigid,) but he understands by it all things connected with him, as though he had said, “Wherever I look around me, I find no peace, and no hope appears to me.” Hence it was, that all the faculties of his soul were far removed from all experience of good things. It follows, —

<250318> **Lamentations 3:18**

18. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord.

18. Et dixi, Periiit fortitudo mea, et spes mea a Jehova.

This verse shews what I have before reminded you of, that the Prophet does not here speak as though he was divested of every sin, and prescribed a perfect rule for prayer. But, on the contrary, in order to animate the faithful to seek God, he sets before them here an instance of infirmity which every one finds true as to himself. It was yet a most grievous trial, because the Prophet almost despaired; for since faith is the mother of hope, it follows, that when any one is overwhelmed with despair, faith is extinct. Nevertheless the Prophet. makes this declaration, *Perished*, he says, *has my strength and my hope from God.*^{F58}

He does not speak through some inconsiderate impulse, as though he was suddenly carried away, as many things happen to us which we have had no thought of; but he speaks what was, as it were, fixed in his mind. As he said, “Perished has my hope and strength from Jehovah,” it is evident that his faith was not slightly shaken, but had wholly failed’ but the expression, *I said*, renders the thing still stronger; for it means, as it is well known, a settled conviction. The Prophet was then fully persuaded that he was forsaken by God; but what does this mean? We ought indeed to maintain this, that faith sometimes is so stifled, that even the children of God think that they are lost, and that it is all over with their salvation. Even David confesses the same thing; for it was an evidence of despair, when he declared,

“I said in my haste, Vanity is every man.” (<19B611> Psalm 116:11.)

He had almost failed, and he was not master of himself when he was thus agitated. There is no doubt but that the Prophet also expressly reminded the faithful that they ought not to despair, though despair laid hold on their minds, or though the devil tempted them to despair, but that they ought then especially to struggle against it. This is indeed, I allow, a hard and perilous contest, but the faithful ought not to faint, even when such a thing happens to them, that is, when it seems to be all over with them and no hope remains; but, on the contrary, they ought nevertheless to go on

hoping, and that, indeed, as the Scripture says elsewhere, against hope, or above hope. (<450418> Romans 4:18.)

Let us then learn from this passage, that the faithful are not free from despair, for it enters into their souls; but that there is yet no reason why they should indulge despair; on the contrary, they ought courageously and firmly to resist it; for when the Prophet said this, he did not mean that. he succumbed to this trial, as though he had embraced what had come to his mind; but lie meant, that lie was as it were overwhelmed for a short time. Were any one to ask, How can it be that hope and despair should reside in the same man? the answer is, that when faith is weak, that part of the soul is empty, which admits despair. Now, faith is sometimes not only enfeebled, but is also nearly stifled. This, indeed, does not happen daily, but there is no one whom God deeply exercises with temptations, who does not feel that his faith is almost extinguished. It is often no wonder, that despair then prevails; but it is for a moment. In the meantime, the remedy is, immediately to flee to God and to complain of this misery, so that he may succor and raise up those who are thus fallen. He then adds,

<250319> Lamentations 3:19	
19. Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.	19. Recordari .(<i>vel</i> , recordando, <i>alii</i> , recordare) afflictionis meae et aerumnae maere (<i>alii vertunt</i> , humiliationem, <i>alii</i> , peccatum; <i>sed nomen afflictionis vel aerumnae melius convenit</i>) veneni et fellis (<i>iterum ponitur לענה quod vertunt quidam</i> , absynthium, <i>sed potius est amaritudo vel venenum</i> , veneni ergo et fellis.)

The verb may be considered as an imperative; it is an infinitive mood, but it is often taken in Hebrew as an imperative. Thus, many deem it a prayer, *Remember my affliction and my trouble, the gall and the poison*. This might be admitted; but what others teach I prefer: that this verse depends on the last. For the Prophet seems here to express how he had almost fallen away from hope, so that he no longer found strength from God, even because he was overwhelmed with evils; for it is very unreasonable to think, that

those who have once experienced the mercy of God should cast away hope, so as not to believe that they are to flee to God any more. What seems then by no means congruous the Prophet here in a manner excuses, and shews that it was not strange that he succumbed under extreme evils, for he had been so pressed down by afflictions and troubles, that his soul became as it were filled with poison and gall. ^{F59}

But in the meantime, he shews by the word *remember*, how such a trial as this, when it comes, lays hold on our minds, that is, when we think too much of our evils. For the faithful ought to hold a middle course in their afflictions, lest they contract a torpor; for as hence indifference and stupidity arise, they ought to rouse themselves to a due consideration of their evils; but moderation ought to be observed, lest sorrow should swallow us up, as Paul also warns us (^{<470207>} 2 Corinthians 2:7.) They then who fix their minds too much on the remembrance of their evils, by degrees open the door to Satan, who may fill their hearts and all their thoughts with despair. The Prophet then describes here the fountain of evils, when he says, that he remembered his affliction and trouble; and suitable to this is what immediately follows, —

^{<250320>} Lamentations 3:20	
20. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.	20. Recordando recordabitur, et humiliabitur in me (<i>vel</i> , super me) anima mea.

The Prophet seems in other words to confirm what he had said, even that the memory of afflictions overwhelmed his soul. For the soul is said to be humbled in or upon man, when he lies down under the burden of despair. It is the soul that raises man up, and as it were revives him; but when the soul is cast as it were on man, it is a most grievous thing; for it is better to lie down a dead body than to have this additional burden, which makes the case still worse. A dead body might indeed lie on the ground without strength and motion, but it may still retain its own place; but when the soul is thus cast down, it is said to press down man, though lifeless, more and more. This then is what the Prophet means. And yet he says that he was so occupied with this remembrance, that he could not thence withdraw his mind.

There is no doubt but that he also intended here to confess his own infirmity, and that of all the faithful; and the reason of this we have already explained. Then relying on this doctrine, even when all our thoughts press us down, and not only lead us to despair, but also hurry us on and cast us headlong into it, let us learn to flee even then to God and to lay before him all our complaints, and let us not be ashamed, because we see that this mode of proceeding is suggested to us by the Holy Spirit. It follows, —

<div><250321> Lamentations 3:21</div>	
21. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.	21. Hoc revocabo ad cor meum, propterea sperabo.

We see here what I have already stated, that if we struggle against temptations, it will be a sure remedy to us, because our faith will at length emerge again, and gather strength, yea, it will in a manner be raised up from the lowest depths. This is what the Prophet now shews. *I will recall this*, he says, *to my heart, and therefore will I hope*. How can despair produce hope from itself? This would be contrary to nature. What then does the Prophet mean here, and what does he understand by the pronoun *this*, זֶה, *zat*? Even that being oppressed with evils, he was almost lost, and was also nearly persuaded that no hope of good anymore remained. As then he would recall this to mind, he says that he would then have new ground of hope, that is, when he had recourse to God; for all who devour their own sorrows, and do not look to God, kindle more and more the hidden fire, which at length suddenly turns to fury. Hence it comes that they clamor against God, as though they were doubly insane. But he who is conscious of his own infirmity, and directs his prayer to God, will at length find a ground of hope.

When therefore we recall to mind our evils, and also consider how ready we are to despair, and how apt we are to succumb under it, some hope will then arise and aid us, as the Prophet here says. ^{F60}

It must still be observed, that we ought to take heed lest we grow torpid in our evils; for hence it happens that our minds become wholly overwhelmed. Whosoever then would profit by his evils, should consider what the Prophet says here came to his mind. for he at length came to himself, and surmounted all obstacles. We see then that God brings light

out of darkness, when he restores his faithful people from despair to a good hope; yea, he makes infirmity itself to be the cause of hope. For whence is it that the unbelieving east away hope? even because security draws them away from God; but a sense of our own infirmity draws us even close to him; thus hope, contrary to nature, and through the incomprehensible and wonderful kindness of God, arises from despair. It follows, —

<250322> Lamentations 3:22	
22. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassion's fail not.	22. Clementite Jehovae, quod non sumus consumpti (vel, certe non sunt consumptae,) certe non defecerunt miserationes ejus.

The first clause may be explained in two ways: The view commonly taken is, that it ought to be ascribed to God's mercy that the faithful have not been often consumed. Hence a very useful doctrine is elicited — that God succors his own people, lest they should wholly perish. But if we attend to the context, we shall see that another sense is more suitable, even that the *mercies of God were not consumed, and that his compassion's had not failed*. The particle כִּי, *ki*, is inserted, but ought to be taken as an affirmative only, *surely the mercies of God are not consumed*; ^{F61} and then, — surely his compassion's have not failed. And he afterwards adds, —

<250323> Lamentations 3:23	
23. <i>They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.</i>	23. Novae ad singula mane; magna veritas tua.

This verse confirms what I have said, that the same truth is here repeated by the Prophet, that God's mercies were not consumed, nor had his compassion's failed. How so? Because they were new, or renewed, every day; but he puts *morning*, and that in the plural number. I am surprised at the hour striking so soon; I hardly think that I have lectured a whole hour.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as there are none of us who have not continually to contend with many temptations, and as such is our infirmity, that we are ready to succumb under them, except thou helpest us, — O grant, that we may be sustained by thine invincible power, and that also, when thou wouldest humble us, we may loathe ourselves on account of our sins, and thus perseveringly contend, until, having gained the victory, we shall give thee the glory for thy perpetual aid in Christ Jesus our Lord. — Amen.

LECTURE TENTH

In the last lecture the Prophet said that the *mercies* of God are renewed daily. This must indeed be viewed according to the apprehension of men, for to God belongs no charge. But the mercies of God seem to be renewed when he for a time hides his face, and again becomes reconciled to us. The Prophet mentions *morning*; and he alludes, as I think, to this passage in the Psalms —

“If weeping dwells with us in the evening,
yet joy will return in the morning.” (<193005> Psalm 30:5.)

He then means that God hastens to succor men in misery.

He subjoins the word *truth*, because a sense of God’s mercy can never come to us except he offers it to us. Were then God to take away the promise, all the miserable would inevitably perish; for they can never lay hold on his mercy except through his word. This, then, is the reason why Scripture so often connects these two things together, even God’s mercy and his faithfulness in fulfilling his promises. It now follows, —

<250324> **Lamentations 3:24**

24. The Lord is my portion,
saith therefore will I hope in him.

24. Pertie inca Jehova, dixit my
soul; anima mea; ideo sperabo in eo.

The Prophet intimates in this verse that we cannot stand firm in adversities, except we be content with God alone and his favor; for as soon as we depart from him, any adversity that may happen to us will cause our faith to fail. It is then the only true foundation of patience and hope to trust in God alone; and this is the case when we are persuaded that his favor is sufficient for our perfect safety. In this sense it is that David calls God his portion. (<191605> Psalm 16:5.) But there is in the words an implied contrast, for most men seek their happiness apart from God. All desire to be happy, but as the thoughts of men wander here and there, there is nothing more difficult than so to fix all our hopes in God so as to disregard all other things.

This then is the doctrine which the Prophet now handles, when he says, that those alone could hope, that is, persevere in hope and patience, who have so received God as their portion as to be satisfied with him alone, and to seek nothing else besides him. But he speaks emphatically, that his *soul* had thus *said*. Even the unbelieving are ashamed to deny what we have stated, that the whole of our salvation and happiness is found in God alone. Then the unbelieving also confess that God is the fountain of all blessings, and that they ought to acquiesce in him; but with the mouth only they confess this, while they believe nothing less. This then is the reason why the Prophet ascribes what he says to his soul, as though he had said, that lie did not boast, like hypocrites, that God was his portion, but that of this lie had a thorough conviction. *My soul* has said, that is, I am fully convinced that God is *my portion*; therefore will I hope in him. We now understand the meaning of this passage.

It remains for us to make an application of this doctrine. That we may not then fail in adversities, let us bear in mind this truth, that all our thoughts will ever wander and go astray, until we are fully persuaded that God alone is sufficient for us, so that lie may become alone our heritage. For all who are not satisfied with God alone, are immediately seized with impatience, whenever famine oppresses them, or sword threatens them, or any other grievous calamity. And for this reason Paul also says,

“If God be for us, who can be against us? I am persuaded that neither famine, nor nakedness, nor sword, nor death, nor life, can separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ.”

(<450831> Romans 8:31, 35-39.)

Then Paul lays hold of the paternal favor of God as a ground of solid confidence; for the words in Christ sufficiently show that those are mistaken interpreters who take this love passively, as though he had said, that the faithful would never cease to love God, though he exercised them with many afflictions. But Paul meant that the faithful ought so to fix their minds on God alone, that whatever might happen, they would not yet cease to glory in him. Why? because God is their life in death, their light in darkness, their rest in war and tumult, their abundance in penury and want. It is in the same sense our Prophet now says, when lie intimates that none hope in God but those who build on his paternal favor alone, so that they

seek nothing else but to have him propitious to them. It afterwards follows,

<250325> Lamentations 3:25	
25. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul <i>that</i> seeketh him.	25. Bonus Jehova expectanti ipsum, (vel, speranti in eum,) animae quaerenti ipsum.

He continues the same subject: he however adds :now something to it, even that God always deals mercifully with his servants, who recumb on him, mid who seek him. We hence see that the last verse is confirmed, where he said that he was content with God alone, while suffering all kinds of adversity: How so? for God, he says, is *good to those who wait for him.*

^{F62} It might have been objected and said, that adversities produce sorrow, weariness, sadness, and anguish, so that it cannot be that they retain hope who only look to God alone; and it is no doubt true that, when all confess that they hope in God, they afterwards run here and there; and the consequence is, that they fail in their adversities. As, then, this might have been objected to the Prophet, he gives indirectly this answer, that God is good to those who wait for him, as though he had said, that the confidence which recumbs on God alone cannot disappoint us, for God will at length shew his kindness to all those who hope in him. In short, the Prophet teaches us here, that the blessings of God, by which he exhilarates his own children, cannot be separated from his mercy or his paternal favor. Such a sentence as this, “Whatever can be expected is found in God,” would be deemed frigid by many; for they might object and say, as before stated, that they were at the same time miserable. Hence the Prophet reminds us here that God’s blessings flow to us from his favor as from a fountain, as though he had said, “As a perennial fountain sends forth water, so also God’s goodness manifests and extends itself.”

We now, then, understand the Prophet’s meaning. He had indeed said, that we ought to acquiesce in God alone; but now he adds, by way of favor, regarding the infirmity of men, that God is kind and bountiful to all those who hope in him. The sum of what he states is, as I have said, that God’s goodness brings forth its own fruits, and that the faithful find by experience, that nothing is better than to have all their thoughts fixed on

God alone. God’s goodness, then, ought to be understood, so to speak, as actual, even what is really enjoyed. As, then, God deals bountifully with all who hope in him, it follows that they cannot be disappointed, while they are satisfied with him alone, and thus patiently submit to all adversities. In short, the Prophet teaches here what the Scripture often declares, that hope maketh not ashamed. (<450505> Romans 5:5.)

But the second clause must be noticed: for the Prophet defines what it is to hope in God, when he says that he is good to *the soul that seeks him*. Many indeed imagine hope to be I know not what — a dead speculation; and hypocrites, when God spares them, go on securely and exult, but their confidence is mere ebriety, very different from hope. We must then remember what the Prophet says here, that they alone hope in God who from the heart seek him, that is, who acknowledge how greatly they need the mercy of God, who go directly to him whenever any temptation harasses them, and who, when any danger threatens them, flee to his aid, and thus prove that they really hope in God. It now follows, —

<250326> Lamentations 3:26	
26. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.	26. Bonum et expectabit et silebit ad salutem Jehovae (<i>ad verbum; vertunt tamen quidam</i> , bonus sperabit et silebit ad Jehovae; <i>sed potius it neutro genere accipio vocem</i> , טוב, <i>sicut in proximo versu qui sequetur</i> , Bonum viro, et coetera.)

It is, indeed, an abrupt phrase when he says, Good and he will wait; for these words are without a subject; but as it is a general statement, there is no ambiguity. The Prophet means that it is *good to hope and to be silent as to the salvation, of God*. Then the verbs in the future tense ought to be rendered its subjunctives, as though it was said, “It is good when any one hopes in the salvation of Jehovah, and is silent, that is, bears patiently all his troubles until God succors him.”^{F63}

But; the Prophet here reminds us, that we are by no means to require that God should always appear to us, and that his paternal favor should always shine forth on our life. This is, indeed, a condition sought for by all; for the flesh inclines us to this, and hence we shun adversities. We, then, naturally

desire God's favor to be manifested to us; how? In reality, so that all things may go on prosperously, that no trouble may touch us, that we may be tormented by no anxiety, that no danger may be suspended over us, that no calamity may threaten us: these things, as I have said, we all naturally seek and desire. But in such a case faith would be extinguished, as Paul tells us in his Epistle to the Romans,

“For we hope not,” he says, “for what appears, but we hope for what, is hidden.” (<450824> Romans 8:24, 25.)

It is necessary in this world that the faithful should, as to outward things, be miserable, at one time exposed to want, at another subject to various dangers — at; one time exposed to reproaches and calumnies, at another harassed by losses: why so? because there would be no occasion for exercising hope, were our salvation complete. This is the very thing which the Prophet now teaches us, when he declares that it is good for us to learn in silence to wait for the salvation of God.

But to express more clearly his mind, he first says, He will wait, or hope. He teaches the need of patience, as also the Apostle does, in Hebrew 10:36; for otherwise there can be no faith. It hence appears, that where there is no patience, there is not even a spark of faith in the heart of man; how so? because this is our happiness, to wait or to hope; and we hope for what is hidden. But in the second clause he explains himself still more clearly by saying, and *will be silent*. To be silent means often in Scripture to rest, to be still; and here it signifies no other thing than to bear the troubles allotted to us, with a calm and resigned mind. He is then said to be silent to God, who remains quiet even when afflictions supply occasion for clamoring; and hence this quietness is opposed to violent feelings; for when some trouble presses on us, we become turbulent, and are carried away by our fury, at one time we quarrel with God, at another we pour forth various complaints. The same thing also happens, when we see some danger, for we tremble, and then we seek remedies here and there, and that with great eagerness. But he who patiently bears his troubles, or who recumbs on God when dangers surround him, is said to be silent or to rest quietly; and hence the words of Isaiah, “In hope and silence;” for he there exhorts the faithful to patience, and shews where strength is, even when we trust in God, so as willingly to submit to His will, and to be ready to

bear his chastisements, and then when we doubt not but that he will be ready to bring us help when we are in danger. (<233015> Isaiah 30:15.)

We now perceive what the Prophet means when he says, that it. is *good if we wait and be silent as to the salvation of God*; even because our happiness is hid, and we are also like the dead, as Paul says, and our life is hid in Christ. (<510303> Colossians 3:3.) As then it is so, we must necessarily be silent as to God’s salvation, and cherish hope within, though surrounded with many miseries. It follows, —

<250327> Lamentations 3:27	
27. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.	27. Bonum viro, si tulerit jugum in pueritia sua.

This verse admits of two meanings; for the word yoke may be explained as signifying teaching, or the scourges of God. We, indeed, undertake or bear in two ways the yoke of God, even when we are taught to receive his doctrine, or when we are resigned when he chastises us, when we are not obstreperous, but willingly submit to his corrections. As then some take the word עֹל, for the yoke of instruction, and others for the yoke of chastisement, two explanations, as I have said, are given; and both are admissible. It is indeed truly said, that it is good for man to be accustomed from his youth to God’s corrections; but Jeremiah seems rather to speak of that obedience generally, which the faithful render to God when they submit to his will. It is then our true happiness when we acknowledge that we are not our own, and allow God, by his sovereign power, to rule us as he pleases. But we ought to begin with the law of God. Hence, then, it is, that we are said to bear the yoke of God, when we relinquish our own judgment, and become wise through God’s word, when, with our affections surrendered and subdued, we hear what God commands us, and receive what he commands. This, then, is what Jeremiah means by bearing the yoke.

And he says, in youth. For they who have lived unrestrained throughout their life, can hardly bear to be brought into any order. We indeed know, that, the aged are less tractable than the young; nay, whether we refer to the arts or to the liberal sciences, the youthful age is the most flexible. The aged are also much slower; and added to this is another evil, they are very

obstinate, and will hardly bear to be taught the first rudiments, being imbued with a false notion, as though they must have lived long in vain. As, then, the disposition in the old is not easily changed, the Prophet says that it is good for us to be formed from childhood to bear the yoke. And this is also seen in brute animals; when a horse is allowed full liberty in the fields, and not in due time tamed, he will hardly ever bear the curb, he will be always refractory. The oxen, also, will never be brought to bear the yoke, if they be put under it in the sixth or eighth year. The same is found to be the case with men. Jeremiah, then, does not say, without reason, that it is good for every one to be trained from his youth in the service of God; and thus he exhorts children and youth not to wait for old age, as it is usually the case. For it has been a common evil, in all ages, for children and youth to leave the study of wisdom to the old. “Oh! it will be time enough for me to be wise, when I arrive at a middle age; but some liberty must be given to childhood and youthful days.” And for this reason, Solomon exhorts all not to wait for old age, but duly to learn to fear God in childhood. So also our Prophet declares that it is good for one to bear the yoke in his childhood. It then follows. —

<250328> Lamentations 3:28	
28. He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him.	28. Sedebit seorsum (<i>vel, solus</i>) et silebit, quia tulit super se.

Here he shews the fruit of teachableness; for when God deals severely with his children, they yet do not rebel, but even then they willingly submit to his authority. For whence comes it that so much impatience rages in men, except that they know not what it is to obey God, to prepare themselves to bear the yoke? so, then, men become furious like wild beasts, never tamed, therefore the Prophet now says, “Whosoever is thus habituated to the yoke of God, will also be silent in extreme evils, and remain quiet.” We now perceive what I have just said, that the fruit of docility and obedience is set forth in this verse.

But when he says that those who are thus trained to obey God *will sit apart*, he expresses most fitly the strength and character of patience. For they for the most part who wish to appear magnanimous make a great

display, and think that their valor is nothing except they appear as on a theater; they allow themselves at the same time an unbridled liberty when they are alone; for they who seem the most valorous, except God's fear and true religion prevail in their souls, rage against God and champ the bridle in adversities, though they may not make a clamor before men, for, as I have already said, they regard display. But here a very different account is given of patience, even that we are to sit alone and be silent, that is, even were no one present as a witness, whose presence might make us ashamed; were we even then to sit, and to submit with calm minds to God, and to take his yoke, we should thus prove our patience. This verse then distinguishes between the simplicity of the godly and that will display in which they delight who seek to obtain the praise of courage, patience, and perseverance, from the world; for these also sit and speak words as from heaven, and as though they had put off the flesh. He who has lost a son will say, that he had begotten a mortal: he who is stripped of all his goods will say, "All my things I carry with me." Thus magnanimously do ungodly men speak, so that they seem to surpass in fortitude and firmness all the children of God. But when they give utterance to these swelling words, what they regard is the opinion which men may form of them. But the faithful, what do they do? They sit apart, that is, though they might shamelessly clamor against God, yet they are quiet and submit to his will. We now understand what is meant by *sitting apart*.

Then he says, *because he will carry it on himself*. Some take נטל *nuthel*, in a transitive sense, "he will cast it upon him." But this is a forced rendering. It would be a simpler meaning, were we to say, because he will carry or raise it on himself. The verb נטל, *nuthel*, means not only to carry, but also elevate or raise up. When, therefore, the Prophet says, that it is an example of real patience when we carry it on ourselves, he means that we succumb not under our adversities, nor are overwhelmed by them; for it is patience when it is not grievous to us to undergo any burdens which God may lay on us; and on this account we are said to regard his yoke as not grievous — how so? because it is pleasant to us. As, then, meekness thus extenuates the heaviness of the burden, which would otherwise overwhelm us, the Prophet says that those who raise up on themselves all their troubles *sit apart*.

I do not, however, know whether this passage has been corrupted; for the expression seems not to me natural. Were we to read עָלוּ, *olu*, his yoke, it would be more appropriate, and a reason would be given for what goes before, that the faithful sit apart and are silent before God, because they bear his yoke; for the pronoun may be referred to God as well as to man. But this is only a conjecture. ^{F64} It follows, —

<250329> Lamentations 3:29	
29. He putteth his mouth in the if dust so be there may be hope.	29. Ponet in pulvere os suum, si forte sit spes.

He continues the same subject; for he describes to us men so subdued to obedience that they are ready to bear whatever God may lay on them. He then says that the sitting and the silence of which he spoke, so far prevailed, that the children of God, though in extreme evils, did not yet cease to persevere in their obedience. For it sometimes happens that those who have made some progress in the fear of God, give proof of their obedience and patience in some small trial; but when they are greatly tried, then breaks forth the impatience which they had previously checked. Then the Prophet teaches us here, that the children of God do not sufficiently prove their patience, when they bear with a calm mind a moderate correction, except they proceed to a higher degree of perseverance, so as to remain quiet and resigned even when the state of things appears hopeless.

By saying that the faithful *put their mouth in the dust*, he means that they lie down humbly before God and confess themselves to be as dead. The import of what is said is this: In time of extreme affliction the wise will put his mouth in the dust, while seeing things in such confusion that all his thoughts vanish away on account of the atrocity of evils; and thus he intimates that the wise would have nothing to say. To put the mouth, then, in the dust is to become mute, as though he had said, that the faithful shut their mouth, when they do not murmur against God nor abandon themselves to complaints, when they do not expostulate that injury is done them, nor allege what the unbelieving usually do when God deals severely with them. In short, to put the mouth in the dust, means to bring no complaints, and so to check ourselves that no clamorous words proceed

from our mouth. Thus another phrase is used to set forth the silence mentioned before.

And that the Prophet here speaks of extreme trials, may be easily gathered from the next clause, *If so be that there is hope*; not that the faithful doubt whether God would give them hope, for they have no doubt but that God, who shines in darkness itself by his word, would at length by, the effect prove that he is not unfaithful. But the particle אולי *auli*, as it is well known, expresses what is difficult; for when anything appears to be incredible, the Hebrews say, *If it may be*. But here, as I have said, it does not intimate a doubt; for when the mind of a godly man fluctuates or doubts, how is it that he puts his mouth in the dust? but the Prophet shews that those who are taught to obey God, persevere even in extreme trials, so that while nothing but despair appears, they yet lie down humbly before God, and patiently wait until some hope shines forth. And here hope is to be taken for the ground or occasion of hope. ^{F65} It afterwards follows, —

<250330> Lamentations 3:30	
30. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him; he is filled full with reproach.	30. Dabit percutienti maxillam, saturbitur opprobriis.

Here he mentions another fruit of patience, that the faithful, even when injuries are done to them by the wicked, would yet be calm and resigned. For there are many who submit to God when they perceive his hand; as, for instance, when any one is afflicted with a disease, he knows that it is a chastisement that proceeds from God; when pestilence happens, or famine, from the inclemency of the weather, the hand of God appears to them; and many then conduct themselves in a suitable manner: but when an enemy meets one, and when injured, he instantly says, “I have now nothing to do with God, but that wicked enemy treats me disgracefully.”

It is then for this reason that the Prophet shews that the patience of the godly ought to extend to injuries of this kind; and hence he says, *He ,will give the cheek to the smiter, and will be filled with reproaches*. ^{F66} There are two kinds of injuries; for the wicked either treat us with violence, or assail us with reproaches; and reproach is the bitterest of all things, and inflicts a

most grievous wound on all ingenuous minds. The Prophet, then, here declares that the children of God ought meekly to suffer when they are violently assailed, and not only so, but when they are dealt with reproachfully by the wicked. This, then, he says of patience. Now follows another confirmation, —

<250331> **Lamentations 3:31**

31. For the Lord will not cast off for ever.

31. Quia non respuet (*vel*, rejiciet) in perpetuum Dominus.

It is certain that there will be no patience, except there be hope, as it has already appeared. As, then, patience cherishes hope, so hope is the foundation of patience; and hence consolation is, according to Paul, connected with patience. (<451504> Romans 15:4.) And this is the doctrine which the Prophet now handles, — that the faithful bear the yoke with meek and calm minds, because they believe that God will at length be propitious to them: hence also arises patience; for the faithful are persuaded that all adversities are temporary, and that there will be a happy end, because God will at length be reconciled to them, though he gives them new evidences of his wrath. ^{F67} The rest to-morrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as it is expedient for us to be daily chastised by thy hand, we may willingly submit to thee, and not doubt but that thou wilt be faithful, and not prove us with too much rigor, but that thou wilt consider our weakness, so that we may thus calmly bear all thy chastisements, until we shall at length enjoy that perfect blessedness, which is now hid to us under hope, and as it were sealed, until Christ thy Son shall reveal it at his coming. — Amen.

LECTURE ELEVENTH

<250332> Lamentations 3:32

32. But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

32. Quia si dolore affecerit, etiam miserebitur secundum multitudinem clementiarum suarum.

We saw in the last Lecture that the best and the only true remedy for sorrows is, when the faithful are convinced that they are chastised only by the paternal hand of God, and that, the end of all their evils will be blessed. Now this they cannot of themselves assume; but God comes to their aid, and declares that he will not be angry for ever with his children. For this promise extends generally to the whole Church,

“For a moment I afflicted thee, in the time of mine indignation, but with perpetual mercies will I follow thee,” (<235407> Isaiah 54:7, 8 :)

and again,

“I will visit their iniquities with a rod, yet my mercy I will not take away from them” (Psalm 89 33, 84.)

When therefore the faithful feel assured that their punishment is only for a time, then they lay hold on hope, and thus receive invaluable comfort in all their evils.

Jeremiah now pursues the same subject, even that God will *shew compassion according to the multitude of his mercies, though he causes sorrow to men*. This may indeed be generally explained as to all mankind; but, as we have said, God has promised this to his own Church. All miseries, regarded in themselves, are tokens of the wrath and curse of God; but as all things turn out for good and for salvation to the children of God, when they embrace this truth, that God, as the Prophet Habakkuk says, remembers mercy in wrath, (<350302> Habakkuk 3:2,) so they restrain themselves and do not despond, nor are they overwhelmed with despair. We now then understand the Prophet’s object in saying, that though God afflicts he yet remembers mercy.

But we must at the same time bear in mind what I have before shewed, that the faithful are exposed to various evils, because it is profitable for them to be chastised by God's hand. Hence appears the necessity of this doctrine, for were we exempt from all adversities, this admonition would be superfluous. But as it cannot be but that God will smite us with his rods, not only because we deserve to be smitten, but also because it is expedient, it is necessary to flee to this consolation which is offered to us, even that God having afflicted us with grief will again shew us compassion, even *according to the multitude of his mercies*. He confirms the truth of what he alleges by a reference to the very nature of God himself. Hence, that the faithful might not debate with themselves whether God would be propitious to them, after having inflicted on them a temporary punishment, the Prophet comes to their aid, and sets before them the mercy of God, or rather mercies, in the plural number; as though he had said, that it could not be that God should deny himself, and that therefore he would be always merciful to his people; for otherwise his mercy would be obliterated, yea, that mercy which is inseparable from his eternal essence and divinity.

And hence, when God is pleased briefly to shew what he is, he sets forth his mercy and patience; for except his goodness and mercy meet us, when we come to him, dread would immediately absorb all our thoughts; but when God comes forth as if clothed and adorned with mercy, we may then entertain hope of salvation; and though conscious of evil, yet while we recumb on God's mercy, we shall never lose the hope of salvation. We not apprehend the Prophet's meaning. It follows, —

<250333> **Lamentations 3:33**

33. For he doth not afflict willingly,
nor grieve the children of men.

33. Quia non affligit ex corde
suo, et delore afficit filios viri.

This is another confirmation of the same truth, that God takes no delight in the evils or miseries of men. It is indeed a strong mode of speaking which the Prophet adopts, but very suitable. God, we know, puts on, as it were, our form or manner, for he cannot be comprehended in his inconceivable glory by human minds. Hence it is that he transfers to himself what properly can only apply to men. God surely never acts unwillingly nor

feignedly: how then is that suitable which Jeremiah declares, — that God does *not afflict from his heart*? But God, as already said, does here assume the character of man; for though he afflicts us with sorrow as he pleases, yet true it is that he delights not in the miseries of men; for if a father desires to benefit his own children, and deals kindly with them, what ought we to think of our heavenly Father?

“Ye,” says Christ, “who are evil,
know how to do good to your children,” (<400711>Matthew 7:11;)

what then are we to expect from the very fountain of goodness? As, then, parents are not willingly angry with their children, nor handle them roughly, there is no doubt but that God never punishes men except when he is constrained. There is, as I have said, an impropriety in the expression, but it is enough to know, that God derives no pleasure from the miseries of men, as profane men say, who utter such blasphemies as these, that we are like balls with which God plays, and that we are exposed to many evils, because God wishes to have as it were, a pleasant and delectable spectacle in looking on the innumerable afflictions, and at length on the death of men.

That such thoughts, then, might not tempt us to unbelief, the Prophet here puts a check on us, and declares that God does *not afflict from his heart*, that is, willingly, as though he delighted in the evils of men, as a judge, who, when he ascends his throne and condemns the guilty to death, does not do this from his heart, because he wishes all to be innocent, and thus to have a reason for acquitting them; but, yet he willingly condemns the guilty, because this is his duty. So also God, when he adopts severity towards men, he indeed does so willingly, because he is the judge of the world; but he does not do so from the heart, because he wishes all to be innocent — for far away from him is all fierceness and cruelty; and as he regards men with paternal love, so also he would have them to be saved, were they not as it were by force to drive him to rigor. And this feeling he also expresses in Isaiah,

“Ah! I will take consolation from mine adversaries.”
(<230124>Isaiah 1:24.)

He calls them adversaries who so often provoked him by their obstinacy; yet he was led unwillingly to punish their sins, and hence he employed a

particle expressive of grief, and exclaimed Ah! as a father who wishes his son to be innocent, and yet is compelled to be severe with him.

But however true this doctrine may be, taken generally, there is yet no doubt but that the Prophet here addresses only the faithful; and doubtless this privilege peculiarly belongs to God’s children, as it. has been shown before. It follows, —

<250334> Lamentations 3:34-36	
34. To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth,	34. Ad conterendum sub pedibus suis omnes vinetos terrae,
35. To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High.	35. Ad pervertendum (ad declinandum) judisium viri coram conspectu excelsi,
36. To subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not.	36. Ad pervertendumm hominem in lite sua, Dominus non videt (<i>vel</i> , non vidit)

Many interpreters think that these three verses are connected with the previous doctrine, and show the connection thus, — that God does not see, that is, does not know what it is to pervert the good cause of a man, and to oppress the innocent; and, doubtless, God is said not to know what iniquity is, because he abhors all evil; for what is the nature of God but the perfection of justice? It may then be truly said, that. God knows not what it is to turn man aside in judgment. Others take not to see, as meaning, not to approve.

If we subscribe to the opinion of those who say that injustice is contrary to the nature of God, there is here an exhortation to patience; as though the Prophet had said that afflictions ought to be borne with resignation, because the Jews had fully deserved them. For the liberty taken to complain arises from this, that men imagine that they are without fault; but he who is convicted dares not thus to rise up against God; for the chief thing in humility is the acknowledgment of sin. This, then, is one meaning. But they who give this explanation, that God does not approve of those who pervert judgment, think that there is here a ground of consolation, because God would at length succor the miserable who were unjustly oppressed. And doubtless it avails not a little to encourage patience when

we are persuaded that God will be an avenger, so that he will at length help us, after having for a time suffered us to be severely treated.

But these expositions seem to me to be too remote; we may give a correcter explanation by supposing a concession to be made, as though the Prophet had said, “It is indeed true that the wicked take much license, for they imagine that God is blind to all evil deeds.” For this madness is often ascribed to the ungodly, that they think that they can sin with impunity, because God, as they suppose, cares not for the affairs of men. They then imagine that God is asleep, and in a manner dead, and hence they break out into all kinds of wickedness. And for this reason it was that David so vehemently rebuked them:

“He who has formed the ear, will he not hear? He who has created the heaven, will he not see?” (^{<199409>} Psalm 94:9.)

This explanation also I cannot approve of, it being forced and not obvious.

I therefore think that the reference is to the impious words of those who complain that God is not moved by any compassion. For this thought almost lays hold on us when pressed down by adversities, — that God has forgotten us, that he is either asleep or lies down inactive. In short, there is nothing more difficult to be assured of than this truth, that God governs the world by his counsel, and that nothing happens without a design. This is indeed what almost all confess; but when a trial comes, this doctrine vanishes, and every one is carried away by some perverted and erroneous thoughts, even that all things roll round fortuitously through blind fate, that men are not the objects of God’s care. Nor is there a doubt but that in Jeremiah’s time words of this kind were flying about; and it appears evident from the context that those Jews were reprov’d who thought that their miseries were disregarded by God, and hence they clamored; for men are necessarily carried away into a furious state of mind, when they do not believe that they have to do with God. The Prophet, then, refers to such impious words, or if they dared not to express in language what they thought, he refers to what was believed almost by all, — that the wicked *perverted the judgment of man*, that they *turned aside a man in his cause*, that *they tore under their feet all the bound of the earth*; ^{F68} that is, that all those things were done by the connivance of God. The plain meaning, then, is, that judgment is perverted before the face of the Most High, — that the bound of the earth such as are helpless, are

despised, trodden under foot by the wicked, — that a man in his cause is unjustly dealt with, and that all this is done because *God does not see.*^{F69} We now, then, perceive what the Prophet means.

But whence came such madness? even because the Jews, as I have said, would not humble themselves under the mighty hand of God; for hypocrisy had so blinded them, that they proudly clamored against God, thinking that they were chastised with unjust severity,. As then, they thus flattered themselves in their sins, this expostulation arose which the Prophet mentions, that man’s judgment was perverted, that the innocent failed in a good cause, that the miserable were trodden under foot; and whence all this? because God did not see, or did not regard these things. Now follows the reproof of this delirious impiety, —

<250337> Lamentations 3:37-38	
37. Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not.	37. Quis iste, dixit; fuit, Deus non praecepit?
38. Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good.?	38. Ex ore Excelsi non egredietur malum et bonum (<i>vel</i> , quasi non egredietur malum et bonum ex ore Excelsi?)

The Prophet, after having mentioned the blasphemy which prevailed everywhere at that time, strongly condemns so gross a stupidity. *Who is this?* he says. He checks such madness by a sharp rebuke — for the question implies an astonishment, as though the Prophet had said, that it was like a prodigy to find men who imagined that God was content with his own leisure, and exercised no care over the world; for this was to annihilate him altogether. God is not a dead being, he is not a spectre; what then? God is the judge of the world. We hence see that it was a monstrous thing, when men entertained the notion that God is idle or forgetful, that he gives up the world to chance. This is the reason why the Prophet asks as of a thing absurd and extremely disgraceful. *Who is this?* he says; Could it be that men should give themselves up to such a degree of madness? for when they said, that anything could happen without God’s command, it

was the same as if they denied his power; for what is God without his judgment?

The other verse may be explained in two ways; but as to the meaning, there is but little difference. It may, then, be read as a question, “Cannot good and evil proceed from the mouth of the most High?” or it may be rendered thus, “As though good and evil should not proceed from the mouth of God.” As to the substance of what is said, we see that there is no need of disputing, for the Prophet confirms what he had said, that men are to be abhorred who imagine God to be as it were dead, and thus rob him of his power and of his office as a judge. And, doubtless, except we hold this truth, no true religion can exist in us; for except all the sayings and doings of men come to an account before the tribunal of God, and also their motives and thoughts, there will be first, no faith and, secondly, there will be no integrity, and all prayer to God will be extinguished. For if we believe that God does not regard what is done in the world, who will trust in him? and who will seek help from him? besides, who will hesitate to abandon himself to cruelty, or frauds, or plunder? Extinguished, then, is every sense of religion by this impious opinion, that God spends his time leisurely in heaven, and attends not to human affairs. This is the reason why the Prophet is so indignant against those who said, that anything could be done without the command of God.

Let us now see how God commands what is wrongly and foolishly done by men. Surely he does not command the ungodly to do what is wicked, for he would thus render them excusable; for where God’s authority interposes, there no blame can be. But God is said to command whatever he has decreed, according to his hidden counsel. There are, then, two kinds of commands; one belongs to doctrine, and the other to the hidden judgments of God. The command of doctrine, so to speak, is an evident approbation which acquits men; for when one obeys God, it is enough that he has God as his authority, though he were condemned by a hundred worlds. Let us, then, learn to be attentive to the commands of doctrine, by which we ought to regulate our life, for they make up the only true rule, from which it is not right to depart. But God is said to command according to his secret decrees what he does not approve, as far as men are concerned. So Shimei had a command to curse, and yet he was not exempt from blame; for it was not his purpose to obey God; nay, he thought that he had offended God no less than David. (<101605> 2 Samuel 16:5, 6.) Then

this distinction ought to be understood, that some things are commanded by God, not that men may have it as a rule of action, but when God executes his secret judgments by ways unknown to us. Thus, then, ought this passage to be understood, even that nothing is carried on without God's command, that is, without his decree, and, as they say, without his ordination.

It hence appears, that those things which seem contingent, are yet ruled by the certain providence of God, so that nothing is done at random. And what philosophers call accident, or contingent, (*ἐνδεχόμενον*) is necessary as to God; for God decreed before the world was made whatever he was to do; so that there is nothing now done in the world which is not directed by his counsel. And true is that saying in the Psalms, that our God is in heaven, and doeth whatsoever he pleaseth, (^{<19B603>}Psalm 116:3;) but this would not be true, were not all things dependent on God's counsel. We hence see that nothing is contingent, for everything that takes place flows from the eternal and immutable counsel of God. It is indeed true, that those things which take place in this or that manner, are properly and naturally called contingencies, but what is naturally contingent, is necessary, as far as it is directed by God; nay, what is carried on by the counsel and will of men is necessary. Philosophers think that all things are contingent (*ἐνδεχόμενα*) and why? because the will of man may turn either way. They then, conclude, that whatever men do is contingent, because he who wills may change his will. These things are true, when we consider the will of man in itself, and the exercise of it; but when we raise our eyes to the secret providence of God, who turns and directs the counsels of men according to his own will, it is certain that how much soever men may change in their purposes, yet God never changes.

Let us then hold this doctrine, that nothing is done except by God's command and ordination, and, with the Holy Spirit, regard with abhorrence those profane men who imagine that God sits idly as it were on his watch-tower and takes no notice of what is done in the world, and that human affairs change at random, and that men turn and change independently on any higher power. Nothing is more diabolical than this delirious impiety; for as I have said, it extinguishes all the acts and duties of religion; for there will be no faith, no prayer, no patience, in short; no religion, except we believe and know that God exercises such care over the world, of which he

is the Creator, that nothing happens except through his certain and unchangeable decree.

Now they who object, and say that God is thus made the author of evils, may be easily refuted; for nothing is more preposterous than to measure the incomprehensible judgment of God by our contracted minds. The Scripture cries aloud that the judgments of God are a great deep; it exhorts us to reverence and sobriety, and Paul does not in vain exclaim that the ways of God are unsearchable. (<451133>Romans 11:33.) As, then, God's judgments in their height far surpass all our thoughts, we ought to beware of audacious presumption and curiosity; for the more audacious a man becomes, the farther God withdraws from him. This, then, is our wisdom, to embrace only what the Scripture teaches. Now, when it teaches us that nothing is done except through the will of God, it does not speak indiscriminately, as though God approved of murders, and thefts, and sorceries, and adulteries; what then? even that God by his just and righteous counsel so orders all things, that he still wills not iniquity and abhors all injustice. When, therefore, adulteries, and murders, and plunders are committed, God applies, as it were, a bridle to all those things, and how much soever the most wicked may indulge themselves in their vices, he still rules them; this they themselves acknowledge; but for what end does he rule them? even that he may punish sins with sins, as Paul teaches us, for he says that; God gives up to a reprobate mind those who deserve such a punishment, that he gives them up to disgraceful lusts, that he blinds more and more the despisers of his word. (<450128>Romans 1:28; <530210>2 Thessalonians 2:10.) And then God has various ways, and those innumerable and unknown to us.

Let us then learn not to subject; God to our judgment, but adore his judgments, though they surpass our comprehension; and since the cause of them is hid from us, our highest wisdom is modesty and sobriety.

Thus we see that God is not the author of evils, though nothing happens but by his nod and through his will, — for far different is his design from that of wicked men. Then absurd would it be to implicate him as all associate ill the same crime, when a murderer, or a thief, or an adulterer is condemned, — and why? because God has no participation in thefts and adulteries; but the vices of men are in a way wonderful and incomprehensible as his judgments. In a word, as far as the heavens are

from the earth, so great is the difference between the works of God and the deeds of men, for the ends, as I have said, are altogether different.^{F70}

The Prophet says that *from the mouth of the most High proceed good and evil*. By “mouth” he means his decree. God indeed does not always declare that he is a judge; he has often executed punishment on the wicked, as it were, in silence; for there were no prophets among the heathens to proclaim the judgments he brought on them. But though God does not always speak when he punishes the wickedness of men, it is yet said that good and evil proceed from his mouth; because he allots to men their punishment as it seems good to him; and then he spares others or bears with them for a time. It follows, —

<250339> Lamentations 3:39	
39. Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?	39. Cur molestia se afficit homo vivens? Vir super peccato suo?

Some explain the verb יִתְאַנֵּן, *itaunen*, by giving it the sense of lying, “Why should man lie?” others, “Why should man murmur?” But I see not what sense there can be in rendering it lying or murmuring. Others translate thus, “Why should man harden himself?” but it is a mere conjecture. Now, this verb sometimes means to weary one’s self, in *Hithpael*. So in the eleventh chapter of Numbers, “The people murmured,” as some render the words; but I think differently; nor is there a doubt but that Moses meant that the people were wearied, so that they in a manner pined away; and this meaning is the most suitable here. For the Prophet had before rebuked those who imagined that God, having relinquished the care of the world, led an inactive and easy life in heaven; but now, in order to rouse the minds of all, he points out the remedy for this madness, even that men should not willingly weary themselves in their sins, but acknowledge that their wickedness is shewn to them whenever any adversity comes upon them. And surely men would not be so infatuated as to exclude God from the government of the world, were they to know themselves and seriously to call to mind their own deeds and words; for God would soon exhibit to them sure and notorious examples of his judgment. Whence then comes it, that we are so dull and stupid in considering the works of God? nay, that

we think that God is like a spectre or an idol? even because we rot in our sins and contract a voluntary dullness; for we champ the bit, according to the old proverb.

We now, then, perceive why the Prophet joins this sentence, *Why does a living man weary himself?*^{F71} *and a man in his sins?* for as long as men thus remain in their own dregs, they will never acknowledge God as the judge of the world, and thus they always go astray through their own perverse imaginations. If, then, we wish to dissipate all the mists which prevent us from seeing God's providence, (that is, by the eyes of faith,) let every one be his own witness and the judge of his own life, and carefully examine himself; it will then immediately occur to us, that God is not without reason angry with us, and that we are afflicted with so many adversities, because our sins will come forth before us. We here see the cause of that madness which makes men to exclude God's providence from human affairs, even because they look not on themselves, but torment themselves without any benefit and become wearied in their sins, and do not raise up their eyes to God. The rest, connected with our subject, I must defer till to-morrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are at this day tossed here and there by so many troubles, and almost all things in the world are in confusion, so that wherever we turn our eyes, nothing but thick darkness meets us, — O grant that we may learn to surmount all obstacles, and to raise our eyes by faith above the world, so that we may acknowledge that governed by thy wonderful counsel is everything that seems to us to happen by chance, in order that we may seek thee, and know that help will be ready for us through thy mercy whenever we humbly seek the pardon of our sins, through Christ Jesus our Lord. — Amen.

LECTURE TWELFTH

<250340> Lamentations 3:40

40. Let us search and try our ways, and turn against the Lord.

40. Percontemur (scrutemur) vias nostras, et inquiramus, et convertamur ad Jehovam.

The Prophet now shews more clearly what the reproof meant which we shortly explained yesterday: he said that men act absurdly while they weary themselves in their sins; he now adds that they would do rightly if they inquired into their own life, and faithfully examined themselves.

For hence is trouble and weariness, when men feel and deplore their outward evils, but consider not the cause, that is, when they consider not that they are justly chastised by God's hand. Then the examination now mentioned is set in opposition to the torpor and weariness with which men in vain torment themselves, and in which they pine away, because they reflect not on their vices. Hence it is that they attain nothing but weariness — and that is a sorrow to death, as Paul says; but sorrow to life proceeds from the self-examination to which the Prophet now invites and exhorts us.

He then says that the only true remedy in adversities is when men carefully examine themselves, and consider what they deserve. ^{F72} He also mentions conversion; for they who are really touched with the fear of God do not stop at this examination, but rise higher; for as God calls them back to the right way, when they acknowledge that they have departed from him, they flee to his mercy, loathe themselves on account of their vices, and seek after newness of life. Thus our Prophet prescribes to us a certain order, — that we are to examine our whole life, and that, being influenced by the fear of God, we are to return to him; for while he treats us with severity, he still kindly invites us by ever offering to sinners a free pardon. He afterwards adds, —

<250341> **Lamentations 3:41**

41. Let us lift our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.

41. Tollamus corda nostra cum manibus ad Deum in coelis.

To conversion he joins prayer; for we cannot be reconciled to God except he buries our sins; nor can repentance and faith be separated. Moreover, to taste of God's mercy opens to us the door of prayer. And this ought to be carefully noticed, because the unbelieving seem at times to be very busy in seeking to return to God's favor, but they only attend to the outward change of life; and at the same time they are not anxious about pardon, but go boldly before God, as though they were not exposed to his judgment.

And we see under the Papacy that while they make long sermons on repentance, they hardly ever make any account of faith, as though repentance without faith were a restoration from death to life.

Hence I said that we ought to notice the mode of teaching which our Prophet adopts: he begins with self-examination, then he requires conversion; but he does not separate it from faith. For when he exhorts us to pray, it is the same thing as though he had set before us the judgment of God, and had also taught us that we cannot escape death except God be propitious to us. How then is pardon to be obtained? by prayer: and prayer, as it is well known, must be always founded on faith.

By telling us to *raise up our hearts to God together with our hands*, he bids us to banish all hypocrisy from our prayers. For all without a difference raise up their hands to God; and nature itself, when we are pressed down with evils, leads us to seek God. But the greater part stifle this feeling of nature. When affliction comes, it is a common thing with all to raise up their hands to heaven, though no one should bid them to do so; but still their hearts remain fixed on the earth, and they come not to God. And the greater part of men are included in that class mentioned by Isaiah,

“This people come to me with their tongue,
but their heart is far away.” (<232913> Isaiah 29:13.)

As, then, men deal thus formally with God, and present a naked ceremony, as though God had changed and suffered his eyes to be covered, the Prophet bids all dissimulation to cease from prayer; *Let us raise up hands*,

he says, *to God*, and also *hearts*. Joel speaks somewhat differently, when he says,

“Rend your hearts and not your garments,” (<290213> Joel 2:13;)

for he seems to exclude the outward rite, because men, wishing to shew that they were guilty before God, rent their garments. Joel says that this was superfluous and useless; and doubtless the rite itself was not so very necessary. But as prayers, when they are earnest, move the hands, our Prophet refers to that practice as useful. At the same time he teaches us that the chief thing ought not to be omitted, even to raise up the hearts to God: *Let us*, then, he says, *raise up our hearts together with our hands to God*; and he adds, *to God who is in heaven*: for it is necessary that men should rise up above the world, and to go out of themselves, so to speak, in order to come to God.

We now then understand the meaning of the Prophet, — that those who repent from the heart ought not to go before God, as though they were not guilty before his tribunal, but that on the contrary they ought to be penitent and humble, so that they may obtain pardon. He afterwards shews that the right way of praying is, when we not only perform the outward ceremonies, but when we open our hearts and raise them up as it were to heaven itself. It is, then, the right way of praying, when the inward feeling corresponds with the external posture. It follows, —

<250342> Lamentations 3:42	
42. We have transgressed, and we have rebelled; thou hast not pardoned.	42. Nos peccavimus et rebelles fuimus; tu non pepercisti.

The faithful do not here expostulate with God, but on the contrary acknowledge that God’s severity was just. That God then had dealt with them severely, they ascribe to their own sins, This is the substance of what is said.

We hence learn that an ingenuous confession ever accompanies repentance, as also Paul teaches us, (<470711> 2 Corinthians 7:11.) For when a sinner is either secure or tries to cover his wickedness, and flatters himself, as we see but a few who willingly humble themselves before God, he contracts the hardness of obstinacy. For this reason the Prophet requires confession;

may, he suggests here the words suitable to be used, when we desire to obtain pardon from God. *We have done wickedly*, he says, *and have been rebellious*. The pronoun, we, is here emphatical, as though the faithful had taken on themselves the blame of all the evils, which the greater part ever sought to disown. ^{F73}

Here then the Prophet shews that there is no other way of being reconciled to God, than by confessing ourselves to be the authors of all our evils; and he also teaches us, that it is an evidence of true repentance, when we do not allege vain pretences as it is commonly done, nor flatter ourselves, but confess that we are guilty. He now shows that guilt ought by no means to be extenuated, so that our confession may be real and complete: but in this respect the world trifle with God. The most wicked are, indeed, ashamed to deny that they are sinners; but as they are forced to make some kind of confession, this they do lightly; and it seems an extorted confession, and is therefore jejune, or at least not complete. But the Prophet here shews that they who seek to be reconciled to God, ought not only in words to acknowledge and confess their guilt, but also ingenuously to open their hearts. Hence he connects perverseness with sin: as though he had said, “We have not sinned simply or in one way, but we have exasperated God himself; and by sinning in many ways and constantly, we have provoked him against us.” He says, in short, that there is then an access open to us to obtain favor, when we do not murmur against God nor contend with him as though he had dealt severely with us, but when we confess that he has been hard and rigid with us, because he had a reason to be so on account of our sins and wickedness. He adds, —

<250343> Lamentations 3:43	
43. Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us; thou hast slain, thou as not pitied.	43. Obtexisti in ira et persecutus es nos; occidisti et non pepercisti.

At the first view, this complaint may seem to proceed from a bitter heart; for here the faithful complain that they had been slain, and then that God had executed his judgment as it were in darkness, without any indulgence; and the next verse confirms the same thing. But it is a simple acknowledgment of God’s righteous vengeance for in their extreme

calamities the faithful could not declare that God dealt mercifully with them, for they had been subjected to extreme rigor, as we have before seen. Had they said that they had been leniently chastised, it would have been very strange, for the temple had been burnt, the city had been demolished, the kingdom had been overthrown, the people for the most part had been driven into exile, the remainder had been scattered, the covenant of God had been in a manner abolished; for it could not have been thought otherwise according to the judgment of the flesh. Had, then, the exiles in Chaldea said that God had smitten them leniently, would not such an extenuation have appeared very strange? and had also the Prophet spoken in the same strain? For the causes of sorrow were almost innumerable: every one had been robbed of his goods; then there were many widows, many orphans; but the chief causes of sorrow were the burning of the temple and the ruin of the kingdom. No wonder, then, that the faithful set forth here their aggravated evils: but yet they seek out no other cause than their own sins.

Hence they say now, that God had *covered them over in wrath*. It is a most suitable metaphor; as though he had said, that God had executed his vengeance in thick darkness. For an object presented to the eye produces sympathy, and we are easily inclined to mercy when a sad spectacle is presented to us. Hence it is, that even the most savage enemies are sometimes softened, for they are led by their eyes to acts of humanity. The Prophet, then, in order to set forth the horrible vengeance of God, says that there had been a covering introduced, so that God had punished the wicked people in an implacable manner. But as I have said, he does not charge God with cruelty, though he says that he had covered them over in wrath. ^{F74}

He then says, *Thou hast pursued us and killed us, and hast not spared*. They intimate, in short, that God had been a severe judge; but they at the same time turned to themselves and sought there the cause, even that they might not, by their own hardness, provoke God against themselves, as hypocrites are wont to do. And the consciousness of evil leads us also to repentance; for whence is it that men grow torpid in their sins, except that they flatter themselves? When, therefore, God suspends his judgments, or when he moderates them, and does not punish men as they deserve, then, if there be any repentance, it is yet frigid, and soon vanishes. This, then, is the reason why God inflicts deadly strokes, because we feel not his hand

except the stroke be as it were deadly. As, then, simple chastisement is not sufficient to lead us to repentance, the Prophet introduces the faithful as speaking thus, “Behold, thou hast in wrath covered us over, so as not to look on us,” so that there might be no opportunity for mercy, that is, that they might be the judges of themselves, and conclude from the atrocity of their punishment how grievously they must have provoked the wrath of God. It follows in the same sense, —

<250344> Lamentations 3:44

44. Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud,
that our prayer should not pass through.

44. Obtexisti in nube tibi,
ne transiret precatio.

The Prophet confirms the same thing, but the words are different. He again repeats the word to cover; but, that the metaphor might be clearer and more fully explained, he says, *with a cloud*. He simply intimates, that a cloud interposed, that God might more unrestrainedly punish the Jews, as they had deserved. Isaiah speaks somewhat otherwise, but for the same purpose:

“The hand of God,” he says, “is not shortened, nor are his ears more deaf; but your sins have interposed a distance between you and God.” (<235901> Isaiah 59:1, 2.)

There is no doubt but that Isaiah meant the same thing as our Prophet, even that God’s nature never changes; and, therefore, that when he seems to rage against his people, the cause ought to be ascribed to their sins, because God ever remains like himself. We know what is said in the Psalms,

“Thou art God who hearest prayer.” (<196503> Psalm 65:3.)

God, then, is always ready to hear his people, and he also possesses power sufficient to help them; but the distance arises from our sins. And so the Prophet now says that a cloud interposed.

Nearly the same sentence is found in the third chapter, as we have seen; for there the Prophet said, in the name of the whole people, that they had become separated from God, but that it was a separation, not because God had changed his purpose, but because the people had, in a manner, rejected

his favor. *Thou hast*, then, he says, covered *thyself with a cloud*, that is, thou hast made for thyself a covering, that prayer may not pass through. This seems, indeed, very strange, because God advances to meet all the miserable, and promises to hear their prayers: what, then, can this mean, that a cloud interposed that prayer might not go through to him? even that the Jews did not pray aright, and that they had closed up against themselves every access by which God could admit them. In short, the faithful do not here contend with God, as though they had been deceived by his promises, but confess that they were unworthy to pray to God, and they also acknowledge that they did not pray aright.^{F75} And according to this sense they say, that they were hindered, as though a cloud interposed, so that their prayer could not ascend to God. It follows, —

<250345> **Lamentations 3:45**

45. Thou hast made us as the offscouring and refuse in the midst of the people.

45. Quisquilias et rejectionem posuiti nos in medio populorum.

They say here that they were exposed to reproach, so as to become, as it were, the sweepings of the world. Some render **סָחִי**, *sachi*, “refuse;” some by other words; and some “filth:” But the word properly means sweepings or scraping’s, called by the Greeks **περιψήματα**. Paul says, that he and his associates were the offscouring (**περιψήματα**) of the world. (<460413> 1 Corinthians 4:13.) He means that they were despised as offscourings or scrapings. The word is derived from sweeping. Whatever, then, is cleaned off by sweeping or scouring, that is, the filth of the house or the floor, is called **סָחִי**, *sachi*. What the Prophet had in view is not obscure; for he means that the degradation of the people was not hidden, but open Go all nations, as though God had erected a theater in Judea, and there exhibited a remarkable and an unusual example of his vengeance. To the same purpose is what he adds, —

<250346> **Lamentations 3:46**

46. All our enemies have opened their mouths against us.

46. Aperuerunt super nos os suum omnes inimici nostri.

He repeats what he had said, that the people were an offscouring, or scrapings, or sweepings, and also a refuse. The last word is, indeed, in the infinitive mood, מֵאֵס, *maus*, but it is to be taken as a noun. They had become all this, because they had as many enemies as neighbors; for we know that the Jews were hated by all the neighboring nations. They had become, then, a refuse and filth among all people, for with an open mouth they spoke furiously against them. For the open mouth means that they spoke insolently, and took the liberty of cursing them all, as it has been stated elsewhere. Now it was the bitterest thing to the miserable people, when they found that the reproaches and taunts of enemies were added to their calamities: for we know how grievously does reproach wound those who are already afflicted.

<250347> Lamentations 3:47	
47. Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction.	47. Pavor et fovea fuit nobis, destructio (<i>alii</i> vertunt, <i>deceptio</i> ,) et contritio.

The Prophet largely dwells on the grievousness of the calamity which had happened. He compares here the anxieties into which the people had been brought, to a *pitfall* and *dread*. There is a striking alliteration in the words פֶּחַד and פֶּחַת, *pechet* and *peched*. But the meaning is, that the people had been reduced to such straits, that there was no outlet for them; as the case is with us, when we are filled with dread, and look here and there, and see nothing but pitfalls on every side; then we are at our wits' end. Such then was the state of the people, as Jeremiah shews: filled with dread, they sought refuge, but saw pitfalls on every side.

He afterwards mentions *desolation* or destruction, and sorrow. It is probably a mistake in Jerome's version, where the first; word is rendered "prophesying." Some think that he was led astray by the letter שׁ, *shin*, which he seems to have read with a point on the left side; and he took the word as coming from נוּשָׁה *nusha*. But another conjecture seems more correct, that the transcribers have committed a mistake; for what I have said is most appropriate to the passage, even that the people were overwhelmed with all kinds of evils, because there was nothing to be seen

but desolation and sorrow, or bruising, or breach, שֹׁבֵר, *shaber*. It now follows, —

<250348> Lamentations 3:48	
48. Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people.	48. Rivi (<i>hoc est</i> , tanquam rivi) aquarum descendit oculus meus super contritione (<i>vel</i> , afflictione, <i>est idem nomen</i> שֹׁבֵר) filii populi mei.

Interpreters give different explanations of the beginning of this verse: some render it thus, “My eye comes down unto rivers of waters;” others, “My eye flows down unto rivers of waters,” or, “rivers of waters flow down.” But as I have explained elsewhere, the Prophet rather means, that his eye came down like rivers; and to come down, or to descend, is a metaphor for flowing down; for water, as it is well known, descends when it flows. And there is a change of number when he says, “My eye descends;” there is also raider-stood the particle of comparison, כִּי, *caph*.^{F76} The meaning is, that his eyes descended or flowed down as rivers. The last: word properly signifies divisions, but; he means that many streams flowed down, as though they were so many rivers.

For the bruising, or the breach, *of my people*: the Prophet speaks here in his own person, though there is no doubt but that he exhorts all others to join him in his sorrow. For the faithful would not have prayed to God with sufficient ardor, had they not been dreadfully broken and confounded; had not the calamity deeply affected them, as it ought to have done, there would have been no serious attention to prayer. This is the reason why the Prophet here mentions his own weepings, and groanings, and tears, even that he might rouse himself to prayer, and lead others also. It follows, —

<250349> Lamentations 3:49	
49. Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission.	49. Oculus meus defluxit, et non quievit a non intermissionibus (<i>hoc est</i> , ut non sint intermissiones, <i>vel</i> ut nulla sit requies.)

He repeats the same in other words, — that his eyes flowed down with tears. He still retains the singular number, but this is common in Hebrew. He then says, that *his eye without end flowed down, so that there was no rest*. But it afterwards follows —

<250350> Lamentations 3:50	
50. Till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven.	50. Donec aspiciat et videat Jehova e coelis.

The Prophet here makes a distinction between his weeping and that blind sorrow by which the unbelieving are affected and violently agitated: they have no regard to God. Then the Prophet says here that he not only wept, but that he also prayed and waited for God to put an end to evils. As I have already said, the unbelieving grieve abundantly in adversities, nay, they abandon themselves to sorrow; but they turn away wholly from God, and are like wild beasts. Then the Prophet points out the right way to mourn: our eyes must flow down to weariness and without rest, but at the same time we must wait until God be propitious to us. Therefore this verse connects well with the former, ^{F77} *until Jehovah look down and see from heaven*; for otherwise tears would draw us to despair, and despair would become the cause of fury; for we see that the ungodly murmur against God.

Thus, then, ought we to weep, in order that we may at the same time cherish hope while we wait for God to look down on us and to see our miseries from heaven. The word *heaven*, is not added uselessly, because men in their evils, when they seek God, are filled with terror, for they do not think that they can ascend to him: hence, then, it is, that they despond, for they imagine that God is too remote from them. The Prophet therefore anticipates here this false notion, and says that we ought nevertheless to wait until God looks down from heaven; which corresponds with what is said in the Psalms: that God is high and yet has respect to low things. (<19B304> Psalm 113:4-6.) Though, then, the majesty of God is elevated above all the heavens, yet this does not prevent him familiarly to regard what is low and despised in the world. At length it follows, —

<250351> **Lamentations 3:51**

51. Mine eye affecteth
mine heart, because of all
the daughters of my city.

51. Oculus meus dolore afficit animam
meam propter omnes filias urbis meae
(*vel pro omnibus filiabus urbis meae.*)

He had said, that his eye flowed down, and then, that it was like a fountain, from which many streams or rivers flowed: he now adopts another mode of speaking, that his *eyes grieved his soul*; and it is a sign of the greatest sorrow when he who weeps seeks some relief, and is at the same time overpowered by that external feeling. For many indulge in grief and inflame themselves; then the soul of man is like a fan to rouse the burning. But when we weep and our eyes shed tears, and when the mind in a manner exhausts itself, it is a proof of the greatest grief. And this great grief Jeremiah wished to express by saying, that *his eye troubled* or grieved *his soul*.

The latter part is explained in two ways: sonic render thus, “Because of all the daughters of my city.” But though this meaning is generally taken, I yet prefer the opinion of those who render the words thus, “More than all the daughters of my city :” for **כַּל**, men, denotes a comparison, as it is also a causative. He says, then, that he was given to grief more than all the young women. As the female sex, as it is well known, are more tender and softer than men, the Prophet amplifies his lamentation by this comparison, that in weeping he exceeded all the young women of the city, so that he had almost forgotten his manhood. Had he said, the daughters of the people, it might be explained as before, as referring either to the cities, or to the whole people, that is, the whole community. But when he mentions *all the daughters of his city*, I cannot otherwise take the passage but as setting forth a comparison, that is, that he could not moderate his grief, but was so seized with it as women are, and also young girls, whose hearts, as it has been already said, are still more tender. ^{F78} The rest to-morrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast hitherto spared us, we may not grow torpid in our vices, and that since thou hast already begun to deal more severely with thy Church, we may be awakened by

thy chastisements, and so humble ourselves under thy mighty hand, as yet not to doubt but that thou wilt be propitious to us, and that we may so loathe ourselves on account of our sins, as still to be fully persuaded that, provided we wait for thee, thou wilt at length be merciful to us, so as to afford us new reasons for joy and gratitude, through Christ Jesus our Lord. — Amen.

LECTURE THIRTEENTH

<250352> Lamentations 3:52

52. Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause.

52. Venando venati sunt tanquam passerem (*vel*, *avem*) inimici mei sine causa.

We shall see to the end of the chapter the various complaints, by which the Prophet deplored the miseries of his own nation, that he might at length obtain the mercy of God. He takes here the comparison of a bird or a sparrow. He says that the Chaldeans had been like fowlers, and the Jews like sparrows: and we know that there is neither prudence nor courage in birds. He, then, means that the Jews had been destitute of all help, having been exposed as a prey to their enemies, who were like fowlers.

And he seems to allude to the words of Solomon, when he says, that without a cause is the net spread for birds (<200117> Proverbs 1:17;) and he means that innocent men are circumvented by the wicked, when they spread for them their snares as it were on every side, while they are like the birds, who have no prudence to avoid them.

We now, then, understand the drift of what the Prophet says: he amplifies the indignity of their calamity by this comparison, — that the Chaldeans at their pleasure plundered the miserable people, who were not able to resist them, who were indeed without any power to defend themselves. ^{F79} It follows, —

<250353> Lamentations 3:53

53. They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me.

53. Succiderunt (*vel potius*, *constrinxerunt*) in puteo vitam meam, et projecerunt lapidem super me.

He now employs other comparisons. Some improperly confine this to Jeremiah himself, as though he explained here before God the wrongs done to himself: but there is no doubt but that he undertakes the cause of the

whole people; and his object was to encourage by his own example the faithful to lament their state so that they might obtain pardon from God.

He then compares himself to a man half-dead, cast into a pit, and there left for lost. Then some improperly interpret the words, “they cast stones;” for stoning was not in the mind of the Prophet; but having said that he was fast bound in a pit or dungeon, he adds that a stone was laid over him, that lie might not come forth, as we know was the case with Daniel.

(<270616> Daniel 6:16, 17.) Daniel was cast into the den of lions, and then a stone was put on the mouth of the den. So also the Prophet says, that he was bound fast in the pit, and not only that, but that a stone was laid over him, that there might be no hope of coming out; and thus the pit was like a grave. Here, then, he means that lie was reduced to the last extremity, because he had not only been taken by his enemies, but had also been cast into a pit. And, as it is well known, it is a metaphorical expression or a similitude. He adds, —

<250354> Lamentations 3:54	
54. Waters flowed over mine head; then I said I am cut off.	54. Inundaverunt (<i>ad verbum, alii, ascenderunt</i>) aquae super caput meum; dixi, succisus sum.

He now adds a third comparison, — that he had been overwhelmed, as it were, with a flood of evils. This similitude occurs often in Scripture, especially in the Psalms; for when David wished to set forth his despair, lie said that he was sunk in deep waters. (<196915> Psalm 69:15, 16.) So also in this place the Prophet complains, that waters had flowed over his head, so that he thought himself lost. Though, indeed, this was the saying of a man in a hopeless state, it is yet evident from the context that the Prophet was firm in the hope of God’s mercy. But he speaks according to the judgment of the flesh; and we know that the faithful are as it were divided; for as they have not put off the flesh, they must necessarily be acquainted with adversities, be stormed by fear and feel anxieties; in short, when death hangs over them, they must in a manner be exposed to fear. In the meantime, faith in their hearts obtains the victory, so that they do not succumb under terrors, or cares, or anxieties.

When, therefore, the Prophet says that in his own judgment he was lost, he does not mean that his faith was so extinguished that he ceased to pray to God; for in the next verse he shews that he persevered in prayer. How, then, did he say or believe that he was lost? even, as I have already said, according to human judgment. And we often see that the faithful complain that they are forsaken, that God is asleep in heaven, that he has turned away from them. All these things are to be referred to the perception of the flesh. While, then, the faithful cast their eyes on dangers, when death comes, they not only tremble, but fear greatly and faint also. In the meantime, as I have said, they struggle by faith against all these temptations. So, then, is this passage to be understood, — that the Prophet believed that he was lost, that is, as far as he could judge by the aspect of things at that time, for no hope appeared then to the Church. But we yet see that the Prophet did not indulge himself in this despair; for he immediately adds, —

<250355> Lamentations 3:55

55. I called upon thy name, O
Lord, out of the low dungeon.

55. Invocavi nomen tuum,
Jehova, e puteo profunditatum.

We certainly see that the Prophet had an inward conflict, which also all the faithful experience, for the spirit fights against the flesh, as Paul teaches us. (<480517> Galatians 5:17.) Though, then, he on the one hand apprehended death, he yet ceased not to flee to God; for faith strengthened his mind so that he did not succumb, but on the contrary he firmly rejected the temptation presented to him. Though, then, he was, according to the flesh, persuaded as to his own ruin, he: on the other hand, called on the name of God; for the faithful do not measure the power and grace of God by their own thoughts, but give glory to God by recumbent on him even in the greatest extremities.

And this passage ought to be carefully noticed; for when Satan cannot in any other way turn us aside from prayer, he alleges our weakness; “What meanest thou, miserable being? will God hear thee? for what canst thou do? thou tremblest, thou art anxious, nay, thou despairest; and yet thou thinkest that God will be propitious to thee.” Whenever, therefore, Satan tries to shut the door against us so as to prevent us to pray, let this

example of the Prophet come to our minds; for he, though he thought himself lost, did not yet cast aside the confidence he entertained as to God’s help and aid. For whence arose his perseverance, except that he in a manner rebuked himself when he found himself so overwhelmed, and as it were dead. These two states of mind are seen in this short prayer of David,

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”
(^{<192201>} Psalm 22:1.)

For when he addressed God, and called him his God, we see his rare and extraordinary faith; and when he complains that he was forsaken, we see how, through the infirmity of the flesh, he thought that it was all over with him as to his salvation. Such a conflict, then, is described here; but faith overcame and gained the victory, for the Prophet ceased not to cry to God, even from *the pit of depths* — from the pit, that is, from death itself.

And this also ought to be carefully observed; for when God bears us on his wings, or when he carries us in his bosom, it is easy to pray; but when we seem to be cast into the deepest gulfs, if we thence cry to him, it is a real and certain proof of faith and hope. As such passages often occur in the Psalms, they may be compared together; but I touch but slightly on the subject, for it is not my object to heap together all the quotations which are appropriate; it is enough to present the real meaning of the Prophet. It follows, —

<250356> Lamentations 3:56	
56. Thou hast heard my voice; hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.	56. Vocem meam audisti; ne occultes (<i>vel, occludas</i>) aurem tuam ad respirationem meam (<i>vertunt, ad clamorem meum</i>) et ad precessionem meam (<i>sed prius nomen accipio potius pro gemitu, vel clamore.</i>)

When the Prophet says that God *heard*, it is the same as though he said, that he had so prayed that God became a witness of his earnestness and solicitude; for many boast in high terms of their earnestness and fervor and constancy in prayer, but their boastings are all empty and vain. But the Prophet summons God as a witness of his crying, as though he had said

that he was not so overwhelmed by his adversity, but that he always fled to God.

He then says, *Close not*, etc.; it is properly, “hide not;” but as this is not quite suitable to ears, I am disposed to give this version, Close not thine ear to my cry. The verb רָחַח *ruch*, means to dilate, to respire; hence almost all render the noun here, “breathing;” but what follows cannot admit of this sense, *to my prayer* or cry. I have no doubt but that these two words mean crying; for in groaning the spirit of man dilates itself, and the soul, compressed by grief, expands. But when we cast our cares and troubles into the bosom of God, then the spirit forcibly emerges. This, then, is what the Prophet means, when he asks God *not to close his ear to his dilation or groaning, and to his cry*^{F80} It follows, —

<250357> Lamentations 3:57	
57. Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not.	57. Appropinquasti in die in quo clamavi ad te (<i>vel</i> , invocavi te,) dixisti, Ne timeas.

Here the Prophet tells us that he had experienced the goodness of God, because he had not suffered a repulse when he prayed. And this doctrine is especially useful to us, that is, to call to mind that we had not in time past prayed in vain. For we may hence feel assured, that as God ever continues like himself, he will be ever ready to help us when- ever we implore his protection. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet declares here that he had experienced the readiness of God to hear prayer: *Thou didst come nigh*, he says, *in the day when I called on thee; thou didst say, Fear not.* And this approach or coming nigh refers to what was real or actually done, that God had stretched forth his hand and helped his servants. Since, then, they had been confirmed by such evidences, they had the privilege of ever fleeing to God. God, indeed, supplies us with reasons for hope, when he once and again aids us; and it is the same as though he testified that he will ever be the same as we have once and again found him to be.

He then adds an explanation, *Thou didst say, Fear not.* He does not mean that God had spoken; but, as I have said, he thus sets forth the fact, that he had not sought God in vain, for he had relieved him. Though God may not speak, yet when we find that our prayers are heard by him, it is the

same as though he raised us up and removed from us every fear. The sum of what is said is, that God had been propitious to his servants whenever they cried to him. It now follows, —

<250358> Lamentations 3:58	
58. O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life.	58. Disceptasti, Domine, disceptiones animae meae, redemisti vitam meam.

For the same purpose he now says, that God had been his judge to undertake his cause, and not only once, for he had contended for him as though he had been his perpetual advocate. The meaning is, that the Prophet (who yet speaks in the name of all the faithful) had found God a defender and a helper, not only in one instance, but whenever he had been in trouble; for he uses the plural number, and says, *Thou hast pleaded the pleadings of my soul*

He adds, Thou hast redeemed my life. It is the way of God’s pleading when he delivers us as it were from death. Friends do, indeed, sometimes anxiously exert themselves, interposing for our defense, but they do not always succeed. But God is such a pleader of our cause, that he is also a deliverer, for our safety is in his hand. It follows, —

<250359> Lamentations 3:59	
59. O Lord, thou hast seen my wrong; judge thou my cause.	59. Vidisti, Jehova, oppressionem (subversionem, <i>alii vertunt</i> , iniquitatem) meam; judica judicium meum.

The word עֲוֹתָי, *outti*, is rendered by some “iniquity,” but in an ironical sense, as though the Prophet had said, “Thou, God, knowest whether I have offended.” But the word is to be taken passively; the verb עָוָה, *out*, means, to subvert, as we have elsewhere seen, even in this chapter. Then, by *his subversion*, he means oppression, even when his adversaries unworthily trod him under their feet. And hence he asks God at the same time to *judge his judgment*, that is, to undertake his cause, and to appear as his defender, as he had formerly done; for he saw his subversion, that is, he

saw that he was unjustly cast down and laid prostrate by the wicked. It follows, —

<250360> Lamentations 3:60	
60. Thou hast seen all their vengeance, and all their imaginations against me.	60. Vidisti omnes ultiones ipsorum, omnes cogitationes contra me.

This mode of speaking was often used by the saints, because God, when it pleased him to look on their miseries, was ever ready to bring them help. Nor were they words without meaning, when the faithful said, *O Lord, thou hast seen*; for they said this for their own sake, that they might shake off all unbelief. For as soon as any trial assails us, we imagine that God is turned away from us; and thus our flesh tempts us to despair. It is hence necessary that the faithful should in this respect struggle with themselves and feel assured that God has seen them. Though, then, human reason may say, that God does not see, but neglect and disregard his people, yet on the other hand, this doctrine ought to sustain them, it being certain that God does see them. This is the reason why David so often uses this mode of expression.

Thou, Jehovah, he says, *hast seen all their vengeance*s. By vengeancees here he means acts of violence, according to what we find in <190802> Psalm 8:2, where God is said “to put to flight the enemy and the avenger.” By the avenger there he simply means, not such as retaliate wrongs, but cruel and violent men. So also, in this place, by vengeancees, he means all kinds of cruelty, as also by thoughts he means wicked counsels, by which the ungodly sought to oppress the miserable and the innocent. He again repeats the same thing, —

<250361> Lamentations 3:61	
61. Thou hast heard their reproach, O Lord, and all their imaginations against me;	61. Audivisti probra ipsorum, Jehova, omnes cogitationes eorum contra me.

We see that this is a repetition, but for vengeance he now mentions *reproaches*. And in this way he sought again to turn God to mercy; for when he brings no aid, he seems to close his eyes and to render his ears deaf; but when he attends to our evils, he then soon brings help. The Prophet, then, having said that God saw, now refers to hearing: he had heard their reproaches. Adopting a language not strictly proper, he adds, that he had heard their thoughts; though he speaks not only of their secret counsels, but also of all the wicked conspiracies by which his enemies had contrived to ruin him.^{F81} He adds, —

<250362> Lamentations 3:62	
62. The lips of those that rose up against me, and their device against me all the day.	62. Labia (vel sermones, <i>aut</i> , linguas) insurgentium contra me, et sermones eorum contra me tota die (<i>vel</i> , quotidie.)

Instead of thoughts, he now mentions *lips*, or words. The verb **הָגָה**, *ege* means to meditate, when no voice is uttered; but as the noun is connected here with lips, there is no doubt but that the Prophet refers to words, rather than to hidden meditations.^{F82} He then says, that such were the conspiracies, that they did not conceal what they had in their hearts, but publicly avowed their wicked purposes. Now this insolence must have moved God to aid his people, so unjustly oppressed.

He adds, *every day*, or daily. This circumstance also must have availed to obtain favor, so that God might the sooner aid his people. For had the ungodly made violent assaults, and soon given over, it would have been easy to persevere in so short a trial, as when a storm soon passes by; but when they went on perseveringly in their machinations, it was very hard to bear the trial. And hence we derive a ground of hope, supplied to us by what the Holy Spirit suggests to us here, that God will be merciful to us on seeing the pertinacity of our enemies. He then adds, —

<250363> Lamentations 3:63	
63. Behold their sitting down, and their rising up, I am their music.	63. Sessionem eorum et surrectionem eorum aspice; ego canticum eorum (<i>vel</i> , pulsatio, <i>ut alii vertunt</i>).

The Prophet repeats still the same thing, only in other words. He had spoken of the lyings in wait, and the conspiracies and the speeches of his enemies; he now adds, that nothing was hid from God. By *sitting* and *rising*, he means all the actions of life, as when David says,

“Thou knowest my sitting and my rising,” (<19D902>Psalm 139:2;)

that is, whether I rest or walk, all my actions are known to thee. By rising, then, the Prophet denotes here, as David did, all the movements or doings of men; and by sitting, he means their quiet counsels; for men either deliberate and prepare for work while they sit, or rise, and thus move and act.

He means, in short, that whether his enemies consulted silently and quietly, or attempted to do this or that, nothing was unknown to God. Now, as God takes such notice of the counsels and all the actions of men, it cannot be but that he restrains and checks the wicked; for God’s knowledge is always connected with his office as a judge. We hence see how the Prophet strengthens himself, as we have lately stated, and thus gathers a reason for confidence; for the wicked counsels of his enemies and their works were not hid from God.

He adds, *I am become a song*. He again sets before God his reproach, east upon him by the ungodly. For that indignity also availed much to lead God not to suffer his people to be unworthily treated. It now follows, —

<250364>Lamentations 3:64	
64. Render unto them a recompense, O Lord, according to the work of their hands.	64. Repende illis mercedem, Jehova, secundum opus manuum suarum

He adds here a conclusion; for he has hitherto been relating, as I have said, the evils which he suffered, and also the reproaches and unjust oppressions, in order that; he might have God propitious to him; for this is the way of conciliating favor when we are wrongfully dealt with; for it cannot be but that God will sustain our cause. He indeed testifies that he is ready to help the miserable; it is his own peculiar work to deliver captives from prison, to illuminate the blind, to succor the miserable and the oppressed. This is the reason, then, why the Prophet now confidently

asks God to render to his enemies *their reward, according to the work of their hands*.

Were any one to object, and say, that another rule is prescribed to us, even to pray for our enemies, even when they oppress us; the answer is this, that the faithful, when they prayed thus, did not bring any violent feelings of their own, but pure zeal, and rightly formed; for the Prophet here did not pray for evil indiscriminately on all, but on the reprobate, who were perpetually the enemies of God and of his Church. He might then with sincerity of heart have asked God to render to them their just reward. And whenever the saints broke forth thus against their enemies, and asked God to become an avenger, this principle must be ever borne in mind, that they did not indulge their own wishes, but were so guided by the Holy Spirit — that moderation was connected with that fervid zeal to which I have referred. The Prophet, then, as he speaks here of the Chaldeans, confidently asked God to destroy them, as we shall again presently see. We find also in the Psalms the same imprecations, especially on Babylon, — “Happy he who shall render to thee what thou hast brought on us, who shall dash thy children against a stone.” (<19D708> Psalm 137:8, 9.) It follows, —

<250365> Lamentations 3:65	
65. Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them.	65. Des illis impedimentum cordis (<i>alii</i> , obstinationem,) maledictionem tuam illis (<i>vel</i> maledictio tua illis.)

He expresses what the vengeance was to be, even that God would give them up to a reprobate mind; for by מַגְנֶת־לֵב, *meganet-leb*, he no doubt meant the blindness of the heart, and at the same time included stupidity, as though he had said, “O Lord, so oppress them with evils, that they may become stupified.” For it is an extremity of evil, when we are so overpowered as not to be as it were ourselves, and when our evils do not drive us to prayer.^{F83}

We now then perceive what the Prophet meant by asking God to *give* to his enemies the *impediment of heart*, even that he might take away a sound mind, and smite them with blindness and madness, as it is said elsewhere.

— I run on quickly, that I may finish, lest the hour should prevent us. The last verse of this triple alphabet follows, —

<250366> Lamentations 3:66	
66. Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the Lord	66. Persequere in ira et perde eos e sub coelis Jehovae (<i>quidam in vocativo casu legunt, Jehova; sed quia non ponitur שׁמִיִּם, sed in constructione שׁמִי, ideo retineo proprietatem.</i>)

He first asks God to *persecute them in wrath*, that is, to be implacable to them; for persecution is, when God not only chastises the wicked for a short time, but when he adds evils to evils, and accumulates them until they perish. He then adds, and prays God to *destroy them from under the heavens of Jehovah*. This phrase is emphatical; and they extenuate the weightiness of the sentence, who thus render it, “that God himself would destroy the ungodly from the earth.” For the Prophet does not without a design mention the heavens of Jehovah, as though he had said, that though God is hidden from us while we sojourn in the world, he yet dwells in heaven, for heaven is often called the throne of God, —

“The heaven is my throne.” (<236601> Isaiah 66:1.)

“O God, who dwellest in the sanctuary.”
(<192204> Psalm 22:4; <197714> Psalm 77:14.)

By God’s sanctuary is often meant heaven. For this reason, then, the Prophet asked here that the ungodly should be destroyed from under the *heaven of Jehovah*, that is, that their destruction might testify that he sits in heaven, and is the judge of the world, and that things are not in such a confusion, but that the ungodly must at length render an account before the celestial judge, whom they have yet long neglected. This is the end of the chapter.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as at this day ungodly men and wholly reprobate so arrogantly rise up against thy Church, we may learn to flee to thee, and to hide ourselves under the shadow of thy wings, and fully to hope for thy salvation; and that however

disturbed the state of things may be, we may yet never doubt but that thou wilt be propitious to us, since we have so often found thee to be our deliverer; and that we may thus persevere in confidence of thy grace and mercy, and be also roused by this incentive to pray to thee, until having gone through all our miseries, we shall at length enjoy that blessed rest which thou hast promised to us through Christ Jesus our Lord. — Amen.

CHAPTER 4

LECTURE FOURTEENTH

<250401> Lamentations 4:1

1. How is the gold become dim!
How is the most fine gold
changed! The stones of the
sanctuary are poured out in the
top of every street.

1. Quomodo obscuratum est
aurum! Mutatum est aurum
bonum! Effusi sunt (*vel*,
projecti) lapides sanctuarii in
capite omnium platearum.

Here Jeremiah, following the order of the alphabet the fourth time,^{F84} deplores the ruin of the city, and the destruction of the priesthood and of the kingdom. For they are mistaken who think that the death of Josiah is here lamented; for there are here many things, which we shall see as we proceed, which do not suit that event. There is no doubt but that this mournful song refers to the destruction of the Temple and city; but when Josiah was killed, the enemy had not come to the city, and the stones of the Temple were not then east forth into the streets and the public roads. There are also other things which we shall see, which did not then happen. It follows then that here is described the terrible vengeance of God, which we have had already to consider.

He begins by expressing his astonishment, *How **obscured is the gold!** and **the precious gold!*** for כָּתָם, *catam*, is properly the best gold, though the word *good*, הַטוֹב, *ethub*, is added to it. We may hence conclude that it generally denotes gold only. He mentions, then, gold twice, but they are two different words in Hebrew, זָהָב, *zaeb*, and כָּתָם *catam*.^{F85} Now he speaks figuratively in the former part of the verse; but there is no doubt but that by the gold, and the finest gold, as it is rendered, he means the splendor of the Temple; for God had designed the Temple to be built, as it is well known, in a very magnificent manner. Hence he calls what was ornamental in the Temple gold.

He then speaks without a figure, and says, that the *stones were thrown* here and there in all directions. Some, indeed, think that these words refer to the sacred vessels, of which there was a large quantity, we know, in the Temple. But this opinion is not probable, for the Prophet does not complain that the gold was taken away, but that it was obscured, and changed. It is then, no doubt, a metaphorical expression. But he afterwards explains himself when he says that *the stones of the sanctuary were cast forth* here and there along all the streets. It was indeed a sad spectacle; for God had consecrated that temple to himself, that he might dwell in it. When therefore the stones of the sanctuary were thus disgracefully scattered, it must have grievously wounded the minds of all the godly; for they saw that God's name was thus exposed to reproaches. Nor is there a doubt but that the Chaldeans vomited forth many reproaches against God when they thus scattered the stones of the temple. It hence appears, that the Prophet did not without reason exclaim, How has this happened! for such a sight must have justly astonished all the godly, seeing as they did the degradation of the temple connected with a reproach to God himself. It follows, —

<250402> Lamentations 4:2	
2. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!	2. Filii Sion pretiosi (<i>alii vertunt, inclytos</i>) comparati auro (<i>alii vertunt, amicti auro, quod mihi magis placet,</i>) quomodo reputati sunt in lagenas testaceas (<i>testae, ad verbum</i>) opus manuum figuli?

The Prophet comes now to the people, though he does not include the whole people, but brings forward those who were renowned, and excelled in honor and dignity. He then says, that they were become like *earthen vessels* and the *work of the potter's hands*, which is very fitly added. Then by the *sons of Sion*, whom he calls *precious* or glorious, he means the chief men and the king's counselors and those who were most eminent. And he seems to allude to that prophecy which we before explained' for he had said that the people were like earthen vessels; and he went into the house of the potter, that he might see what was made there. When the potter made a vessel which did not please him, he remodeled it, and then it

assumed another form; then God declared that the people were in his hand and at his will, as the clay was in the hand of the potter. (<241802> Jeremiah 18:2; 19:11.) When he now says, that the chief men were stripped of all dignity, and reduced to another form, so as to become like earthen vessels, he no doubt sets forth by this change the judgment of God, which the Jews had for a time disregarded.

And we must bear in mind the Prophet's object: he described the ruin of the Temple and city, that he might remind the people of the punishment which had at length been inflicted; for we know that the people had not only been deaf, but had also scoffed at and derided all prophecies and threatenings. As, then, they had not believed the doctrine of Jeremiah, he now shews that what he had predicted was really fulfilled, and that the people were finding to their cost that God did not trifle with them when he had so often threatened what at length happened. And hence we may conclude, that there was then a superfluous splendor in garments, for we read that they had been clad or clothed in gold; surely it was a display too sumptuous. There is, however, no wonder, for we know that Orientals are far too much given to such trumperies.

Now, if the other reading, that the *sons of Sion had been before compared to gold*,^{F86} be more approved, the passage must be extended to all their dignity and to all those gifts by which they had been favored and had become illustrious. I have already reminded you, that the *work of the potter's hands* is here to be taken for the vessels or the earthen flagons; but it was the Prophet's object to enlarge on that reproach, which had been before incredible. It follows —

<250403> Lamentations 4:3	
3. Even the sea-monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.	3. Etiam serpentes educunt mammam, lactant catulos suos; filia populi mei ad crudelem tanquam ululm (<i>vel</i> , struthiones) in deserto.

This verse is harshly explained by many, for they think that the daughter of the people is called cruel, because she acted towards her children as serpents do to their young ones. But this meaning is not suitable, for the

word **בֶּת**, *beth*, is well known to be feminine. He says that the daughter of the people had come to a savage or cruel one, the latter word is masculine. Then the Prophet seems to mean that the whelps (such is the word) of serpents are more kindly dealt with than the Jews. Serpents are void of all humanity, yet they nourish their brood and give them the breast,. Hence the Prophet by this comparison amplifies the miseries of the people, that their condition was worse than that of serpents, for the tender brood are nourished by their mothers; but the people were without any help, so that they in vain implored the protection of their mother and of others. ‘We now see the real meaning of the Prophet.

The particle **גַּם**, *gam*, is emphatical; for had he spoken of animals, such as are careful to nourish their young, it would not have been so wonderful; but so great seems to be the savageness and barbarity of serpents, that they might be expected to eat away their brood. Now he says that *even serpents draw out the breast*. The Jews say that the breasts of serpents are covered with scales, as though they were hidden; but this is one of their figments. It is a common phrase, taken from t common practice; for a woman draws out the breast when she gives suck to her infant; so serpents are said to draw out the breast when they give suck to their whelps; for **גִּרִּים**, *gurim*, are the whelps of lions or of bears; but in this place the word is applied to serpents. *The daughter*, then, *of my people has come to the cruel one*, for the people had to do with nothing but cruelty, there being no one to bring them help or to succor them in their miseries. He, then, does not accuse the people of cruelty, that they did not nourish their children, but on the contrary he means that they were given up to cruel enemies ^{F87}

As the ostriches, or the owls, he says, in the wilderness. If we understand the ostrich to be intended, we know that bird to be very stupid; for as soon as she lays an egg, she forgets and leaves it. The comparison, then, would be suitable, were the daughter of the people said to be cruel, because she neglected her children; but the Prophet, as I think, means, on the contrary, that the Jews were so destitute of every help, as though they were banished into solitary places beyond the sight of men; for birds in solitude in vain seek the help of others. As, then, the ostrich Or the owl has in the desert no one to bring it help, and is without its own mother, so

the Prophet intimates that there was no one to stretch forth a hand to the distressed people to relieve their extreme miseries. It follows, —

<250404> Lamentations 4:4	
4. The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them.	4. Adhaesit lingua lactantis ad palatum ejus in siti; parvuli petierunt panem, dividens nemo illis (<i>hoc est, nemo est qui illis dividat, id est, porrigat.</i>)

He says that sucking children were so thirsty, that the tongue was as it were fixed to the palate; and it was a dreadful thing; for mothers would willingly pour forth their own blood to feed their infants. When, therefore, the tongue of a child clave to his mouth, it seemed to be in a manner beyond nature. Among other calamities, then, the Prophet names this, that *infants pined away with thirst*, and also that *children sought bread* in vain. He speaks not in the latter instance of sucklings, but, of children three or four years old. Then he says that they *sought* or asked for bread, but that there was no one to give. ^{F88}

He describes here the famine of the city, of which he had predicted, when he declared that it would be better with the slain than with the people remaining alive, for a harder conflict with famine and want would await the living. But this was not believed. Now, then, the Prophet upbraids the Jews with their former perverseness. He afterwards adds, —

<250405> Lamentations 4:5	
5. They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dung-hills.	5. Qui comedebant ad delicias (hoc est, in deliciis, <i>ad verbum, למעדנים</i> ,) perierunt in plateis; qui educati fuerant in coccino (ad coccinum,) amplexi sunt stercora.

Here he goes on farther, and says, that they had perished with famine who had been accustomed to the most delicate food. He had said generally that infants found nothing in their mothers' breasts, but pined away with

thirst, and also that children died through want of bread. But he now amplifies this calamity by saying, that this not only happened to the children of the common people, but also to those who had been brought up delicately, and had been clothed in scarlet and purple.

Then he says that *they perished in the streets*, and also that they *embraced the dunghills*, because they had no place to lie down, or because they sought food, as famished men do, on dunghills.^{F89} It seems to be a hyperbolical expression; but if we consider what the Prophet has already narrated and will again repeat, it ought not to appear incredible, that those who had been accustomed to delicacies embraced dunghills; for mothers cooked their own children and devoured them as beef or mutton. There is no doubt but that the siege, of which we have before read, drove the people to acts too degrading to be spoken of, especially when they had become blinded through so great a pertinacity, and had altogether hardened themselves in their madness against God. It follows, —

<250406> Lamentations 4:6	
6. For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.	6. Et major fuit poena filiae populi mei poena Sodomae (<i>ad verbum est, iniquitas filiae populi mei peccato vel scelere Sodomae; sed statim, dicam cur de poena exponam potius quam de ipso scelere,</i>) quae eversa fuit tanquam momento; non manserunt in ea plagae (<i>alii vertunt, et non castrametatae sunt manus; sed postea etiam dicam cur mihi magis placeat illa versio.</i>)

The Prophet says first,, that the punishment of his people was heavier than that of Sodom. If any one prefers the other version, I will not contend, for it is not unsuitable; and hence also a most useful doctrine may be drawn, that we are to judge of the grievousness of our sins by the greatness of our punishment for God never exceeds what is just when he takes vengeance on the sins of men. Then his severity shews how grievously men have sinned. Thus, Jeremiah may have reasoned from the effect to the cause, and declared that the people had been more wicked than the Sodomitites. Nor is this unreasonable; for if the Jews had not

fallen into that great wickedness of which the Sodomites were guilty, yet the Prophets everywhere charged them as men who not only equaled but also surpassed the Sodomites, especially Ezekiel, (<261646> Ezekiel 16:46, 47.) Isaiah also called them the people of Gomorrha, and the king's counselors and judges, the princes of Sodom, (<230109> Isaiah 1:9, 10.) This mode of speaking is then common in the Prophets, and the meaning is not unsuitable.

But as he dwells only on the grievousness of their punishment, the other explanation seems more simple; for I regard not what is plausible, but accept the true meaning. Let us then repeat the Prophet's words: *greater is the punishment of my people*, etc. The word עֹן, *oun*, means punishment as well as iniquity; this is certain, beyond dispute. Now חֲטָאת, *chethat*, means also both sin and punishment. It is hence applied to expiations; the sacrifice for sin is called חֲטָאת, *chethat*. As to the words, then, they designate punishment as well as sin, the cause of it. But the reason which follows leads me to consider punishment as intended, for he says that *Sodom was overthrown* as in a moment. Here, doubtless, we see that the sins of the Jews are not compared to the sins of the Sodomites, but their destruction only: God had overthrown Sodom, as afterwards he overthrew Jerusalem; but the ruin of Sodom was milder, for it perished in a moment — for when God had dreadfully thundered, the Sodomites and their neighboring citizens were immediately destroyed; and we know that the shorter the punishment, the more tolerable it is. As the Prophet here compares the momentary destruction of Sodom with the prolonged ruin of the city and slaughter of the people, we see that what is spoken of is not sin, but on the contrary God's judgment.

There is yet no doubt but that the Prophet summoned the Jews to God's tribunal, that they might know that they deserved such a vengeance, and that they might perceive that they were worse than the Sodomites. For it was not the Prophet's object to expostulate with God, or to charge him with having been too rigid in destroying the city of Jerusalem. As, then, the Prophet does not charge God either with injustice or with cruelty, it is certain that punishment is what is here set forth, in order that the people might know what they deserved. ^{F90}

But the words declare nothing more than that God's vengeance had been severer towards the Jews than towards the Sodomites. How so? it is

evident from this reason, *because Sodom was consumed as in a moment*; and then it is added, *and strokes remained not on her*. The word יָד, *id*, as it is well known, means hand, a place, but sometimes, metaphorically, a stroke. Interpreters vary here, but I shall not recite the opinions of all, nor is it needful. Those who seem to come nearest to the words of the Prophet, render them thus, “and hands (or forces) have not encamped against her.” But this is a forced and far-fetched meaning. It would run better, “have not remained.” The verb חוּל *chul*, means sometimes to encamp and sometimes to remain, to settle. Then the most appropriate meaning would be, *that strokes settled not on the Sodomites*, while the Jews pined away in their manifold evils.^{F91} For they did not immediately perish like the Sodomites; but when God saw them so obstinate in their wickedness, he destroyed some by famine, some by pestilence, and some by the sword; and then the city was not immediately demolished altogether, as it often happens when enemies make a slaughter and kill men, women, and children; but this people were not so destroyed. Many of them were driven into exile, and some of the common people were left to inhabit the ruined cities, for there was dreadful desolation. The king himself, as it has before appeared, was removed to Babylon, but his eyes had previously been pulled out, and his children slain in his presence.

We hence see that the destruction of the city was like a slow consumption: and that thus strokes remained there as it were fixed, which did not happen to Sodom; for Sodom suddenly perished when God thundered against it; but the hand of God did not depart from the Jews, and the strokes or smitings, as I have said, were fixed on them and continued. It follows, —

7. Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire:

7. Candidiores Nazaræi ejus nive, (*vel*, puriores,) candidiores lacte, rubicundi fuerunt corpore suo (*neque enim hoc potest accipi de ossibus*) supra lapillos preciosos, sapphirus excisio ipsorum:

8. Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick.

8. Obtenebrata est prae caligine forma ipsorum, non agniti in plateis; adhaesit cutis eorum ossi ipsorum, (*hoc est*, ossibus;) exaruit, fuit tanquam lignum.

Here the Prophet speaks of Nazarites, by whom we know the worship of God was honored; for they, who were not content with the common observance of the Law, consecrated themselves to God, that by their example they might stimulate others. It was then a singular zeal in a few to consecrate themselves, so as to become Nazarites, or separated. What this custom was may be known from the sixth chapter of Numbers. For God, who has always repudiated all fictitious forms of worship, prescribed to the Nazarites what he approved in every particular. Hence Moses carefully men-honed all those things which were to be observed by the Nazarites.

As to the present passage, it is enough to say, that the Nazarites were peculiarly devoted to God's service during the time of their separation, for it was only a temporary service.

Then the Prophet brings them forward, that it might hence be evident how sad was the change, which he never could have made the Jews to believe. He says that the Nazarites were purer than snow, and whiter than milk, and also ruddier than precious stones, so that they might be compared to sapphire; for, by saying sapphire was their cutting, he means that they were like sapphires well polished. Now we know that the Nazarites abstained from wine and strong drink: hence abstinence might have lessened somewhat of their ruddiness. For he who is accustomed to drink wine, if he abstains for a time, is apt to grow pale; he will then lose almost

all his color, at least he will not be so ruddy; nor will there appear in his face and in his members so much rigor as when he took his ordinary support. Jeremiah, in short, teaches us that the blessing of God was conspicuous in the Nazarites, for he wonderfully supported them while they were for a time abstinence.

Now, on the contrary, he says that the *Nazarites were become withered, that their skin clave to their bones*, that, in short, they were so deformed that they could not be known, not only in obscure corners, but even in the open street, in the middle of the market-place. We hence learn that as the favor of God had before appeared as to the Nazarites, so now also his vengeance might be certainly known, because they had fallen off from their vigor, and were reduced to a degrading deformity. ^{F92}

The Prophet at the same time shews that worship according to the law had in a manner deteriorated on account of the vices of the people; and this is the design of the whole, as I reminded you at the beginning. For there is no doubt but that he wished to rouse the Jews, that they might at length raise up their eyes to God; for they had long grown torpid in their vices, and had been even inflated with diabolical pride; hence was their inveterate obstinacy. As long as the Temple stood, they thought that they satisfied God by the sacrifices they offered. When the Prophet now tells them that the stones of the Temple were thrown down, it hence follows that the Temple was profaned' whence this profanation? from the wickedness of the people. The Chaldeans, indeed, thought that they brought a great reproach on God when they demolished the Temple; but, as long as pollution had preceded, our Prophet now represents to the Jews their sins as in a mirror or a living form; for they had polluted the Temple before the Chaldeans. So also he shews that the worship according to the law was no longer pleasing to God, for they had mocked him with empty specters; for it was only a vain display when there was no integrity within. The Prophet then shews to them what, he could before by no means have persuaded them to believe, that God was in no way pleased with the external worship of the Jews, while they were audaciously violating the whole law. It afterwards follows, —

9. They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with through for want of the fruits of the field.

9. Meliores fuerunt occisi gladio quam occisi fame; fluxerunt transrossi a fructibus agri.

The beginning of the verse is without any difficulty; for the Prophet. says that it happened better to those who immediately perished by the sword than to others who had to struggle with famine, according to what he had lately said, that the punishment of Sodom was more tolerable, because it. was suddenly executed. Sudden death is the easiest And the Prophet, when complaining that the ungodly prospered, so that the faithful sometimes envied them, says that they die as it were in a moment, and are taken away from the world; but he says that the faithful are held, as it were, captive by the snares of death, and protract life in perpetual languor. For this reason the Prophet now says that the punishment of death would have been light to the Jews. And yet we know that. a violent death is regarded by us with horror. For he who dies on his bed is said to yield to his fate, as he seems to pay what he owes to nature; but, he who is slain by the sword is violently snatched away, and, as it were, contrary to nature. Violent death, then, is always horrible. But the comparison used by the Prophet amplifies the atrocity of their punishment, because it would have been more desirable to have been killed at once than to remain alive to struggle with famine.

And he expresses himself more clearly by saying that *they pined away, having been pierced through by the fruits of the earth*. There is here some obscurity, but *by the fruits of the earth*, we are no doubt to understand all kinds of food. Some consider that “defect,” or failure, is to be understood. But the Prophet speaks much more emphatically, even that all the productions of the earth took vengeance on this wicked people, by refusing the usual supply. The earth is the servant of God’s bounty and kindness; for it is the same as though he with his hand extended food to us, when the earth opens its bowels; so also the productions of the earth are evidences of God’s paternal love towards us. Now, when the fruits of the earth withdraw themselves from us, they are as it were the weapons to execute God’s vengeance. So, then, the Prophet means that the Jews had

been *pierced through by the fruits of the earth, and thus had pined away*; as though he had said, that they had not been pierced by the sword, but had been wounded by famine, for the productions of the earth became, as it were, swords, while yet they sustain, as we have said, the life of men. ^{F93}

PRAYER.

Grant. Almighty God, that as thou shewest by thy Prophet that, after having long borne with thine ancient people, thy wrath at length did so far burn as to render final judgment above all others remarkable, — O grant that we may not at this day, by our obstinacy or by our sloth, provoke thy wrath, but be attentive to thy threatenings, yea, and obey thy paternal invitations, and so willingly devote ourselves to thy service, that as thou hast hitherto favored us with thy blessings, so thou mayest perpetuate them, until we shall at length enjoy the fullness of all good things in thy celestial kingdom, through Christ our Lord. — Amen.

LECTURE FIFTEENTH

<250410> Lamentations 4:10

10. The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

10. Manus mulierum misericordium coxerunt foetus suos, fuerunt in alimenta ipis in contritione filiae populi mei.

Here Jeremiah refers to that disgraceful and abominable deed mentioned yesterday; for it was not only a barbarity, but a beastly savageness, when mothers boiled their own children. That it was done is evident from other writers; but, the Prophet is to us a sufficient witness, who had seen it with his own eyes. He then says that the mothers were merciful, that no one might think that they were divested of every natural feeling; but he meant thus to set forth the blindness which proceeds from God's dreadful vengeance. He does not, then, praise the mothers for their clemency, as though they felt as they ought to have done for their offspring; but, he intimates that though they would have been otherwise humane, they were yet seized with unusual madness, so that they boiled their own children, even their own bowels. We now, then, perceive the meaning of the word *merciful*, as applied to the mothers by the Prophet. It is not then to be deemed as a praise to them, as though they had a maternal love for their children; but his object was to set forth that monstrous act, which would not have sufficiently touched their minds, had he not testified that the mothers of whom he speaks were not so brutal as not to have gladly given food to their children; but that they were supernaturally blinded by furious madness. It follows —

<250411> **Lamentations 4:11**

11. The Lord hath accomplished his fury; he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundation thereof.

11. Complevit (*vel*, perfecit) Jehova iracundiam suam, effudit excandescientiam irae suae et accendit ignem in Sion, qui voravit fundamenta ejus.

He at length concludes that nothing was wanting to complete the extreme vengeance of God; for had the Jews been chastised in an ordinary way, they would have still extenuated their sins, as we know that they were not easily led to repentance. Hence the Prophet, to shew that their offenses had not been slight, but that they had been extremely wicked before God, says that the whole of God's wrath had been executed: *Jehovah has completed his wrath*. The expression is indeed harsh to Latin ears; but the meaning is, that he had executed his extreme judgment.

He afterwards adds, *He has poured forth the indignation of his wrath*. God is indeed content with moderate punishment, provided men be awakened from their torpor; but when he pours forth his wrath, there is no hope of repentance. It is then a sign of final despair when God's vengeance overflows like a deluge. But when Jeremiah thus speaks, he does not contend with God, but rather reminds the Jews of what they deserved, as it was stated yesterday. There is, then, no doubt but that he argues, from the grievousness of their punishment, that there was no reason for the Jews to flatter themselves any longer, since God had dealt so severely with them.

He then, in other words, points out the same thing, that God had *kindled a fire which devoured* or consumed *the very foundations*. Fire is wont rather to take hold on the roofs of houses, or, when it creeps farther, it does not proceed beyond the surface. It is a very rare thing for it to penetrate into the foundations. Let us at the same time know that the Prophet speaks metaphorically of the destruction of the city, for it was such as left nothing remaining. For when some ruins remain, there is some intimation of a future restoration at least the minds of beholders are inclined to hope that what has fallen is to be restored; but when the buildings are not only pulled down, but also demolished from their foundations, then the

destruction seems to be without any hope of restoration. And this is what the Prophet means when he says, that the *fire had consumed*, not only what was above ground, but the *very foundations* of Jerusalem. It follows,

—

<250412> Lamentations 4:12	
12. The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem.	12. Non crediderunt (<i>vel</i> , non credidissent) reges terrae, neque omnes incolae orbis, quod ingressus esset adversarius et inimicus in portas Jerusalem.

He confirms the same thing; for when a thing incredible happens, either we are extremely stupid, or we must be moved and affected. The Prophet, then, now says that the destruction of the city of Jerusalem had been incredible, because God had defended it by his power; it was also so fortified that no one believed that it could be taken, and the grandeur of the city was known everywhere.

He then says that Jerusalem had been taken and overthrown, which no one of the heathens, neither their kings nor their people, had thought possible. It then follows that the city had been destroyed by God’s hand rather than by the power of enemies. Nebuchadnezzar had indeed brought a strong army, but the city was so well fortified that they thought that all attempts would be in vain. That the city, then, was taken and demolished, could not have been ascribed to human forces, but to a power hidden from the eyes of men. It then follows that it was God’s work, and indeed singular. We now, then, understand the design of the Prophet in saying that it was not believed by kings nor people that enemies could storm Jerusalem. And in continuation he adds, —

<250413> Lamentations 4:13	
13. For the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her.	13. Propter peccatum prophetarum ejus, iniquitatem sacerdotum ejus, qui fuderunt in medio ejus sanguinem justorum.

The Prophet, as in a matter fully proved, rebukes the Jews, that he might, as it was necessary, bring down their pride. Had he at first condemned the wickedness of the prophets and the priests, no credit would have been given to his word. But after he had set before them what we have observed, and especially after he had shewn that the ruin of the city was a kind of prodigy, what he now adds must have been certainly inferred, even that the Jews had in so many ways and with such pertinacity provoked God, that it became necessary that they should be wholly destroyed, as it happened.

But he points out here the sins by which God's wrath had been kindled against the people. He then says that the fountain or the origin was ill the prophets and priests. Now, we have elsewhere explained that the fault was not removed from the people when the prophets and the priests were thus condemned. Indeed, the common people readily exonerate themselves when they can plead ignorance, or say that they have been deceived by their teachers and leaders. But when Jeremiah imputes the chief part of the evils to the prophets and priests, he does not, as I have said, devolve on them the fault of the people, but intimates that their physicians had been as it were impostors. For when the people corrupted themselves, the prophets were sent for this end, to apply a remedy to their evils, and so also were the priests; for we know that it was a duty enjoined on them to retain the people in true religion and in the worship of God. In short, Jeremiah shows that the people had been ruined, because corruption had begun with the prophets and the priests; or, which is the same thing, that the sins of the people had proved fatal, because their heads or chiefs were diseased; *because, he says, of the sin of the prophets, and the iniquity of the priests, etc.*

He mentions one kind of sins, that *they shed the blood of the righteous in the midst of Jerusalem*. They had no doubt led the people astray in other things, for they flattered their vices, and gave loose reins to licentiousness; but the Prophet here fixed on one particular sin, the most grievous; for they had not only, by their errors and false doctrines and flatteries, led away the people from the fear of God, but had also obstinately defended their impiety, and by force and cruelty repressed their faithful teachers, and put to death the witnesses of God; for by the *righteous* or just he no doubt means the prophets. For what Jerome and others say, that blood had been shed because false teachers draw souls to perdition, is frivolous

and wholly foreign to what Jeremiah had in view; for the word righteous cannot be applied to those miserable men who were ensnared to their own ruin. Then Jeremiah, after having denounced the sin of the prophets and the iniquity of the priests, mentions the savage cruelty, which was as it were the summit of all their riches. Though, then, they had in various ways provoked God, yet this was their extreme wickedness, that they exercised so great a cruelty against God's servants, that they constrained as it were the Holy Spirit to be silent. For when the despisers of God went so far as to give themselves up to shed innocent blood, it was a proof of a diabolical obstinacy. We now, then, understand what the Prophet had here in view.

Now this passage teaches us, that Satan has from the beginning polluted the sanctuary of God by means even of sacred names: for the prophetic office was honorable — so also was the sacerdotal. God had established among his people the priesthood, which was as it were a living image of Christ: there was then nothing more excellent than the priesthood under the Law, if we regard the institution of God. It was also a singular blessing that God promised that his people should never be without prophets. As, then, prophets and priests were two eyes as it were in the Church, the devil turned them to every kind of profanation. This example then reminds us how much we ought to watch, lest empty titles deceive us, which are nothing but masks or specters. When we hear the name of Church and of pastors, we ought reverently to regard the office as well as the order which has proceeded from God, provided we are not content with naked titles, but examine whether the reality also corresponds. Thus we see that the whole world has for many ages degenerated from true religion; under what pretext? even this, — that those who led astray miserable souls, boasted that they were the vicars of Christ, the successors of the apostles, so that they still arrogantly boast of these titles, and are inflated with them. But we see what happened in the time of Jeremiah.

We have had before similar passages; but this ought to be carefully noticed, for it says, that prophets and priests had destroyed the very Church of God. It was, indeed, a very grievous trial, and therefore a powerful instrument, as it were, for subverting the faith of the simple, when they saw that the very prophets and priests were the cause of ruin; but it behoved the faithful constantly to persevere in their obedience to the law. And we ought at the same time to remember what I have said, that the Prophet enhances the wickedness of the people, because the priests and

the prophets themselves had been infected with impiety and contempt of God, and not only so, but they had exercised tyrannical cruelty towards the servants of God. It follows, —

<div><250414> Lamentations 4:14</div>	
14. They have wandered as blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments.	14. Errarunt caeci (<i>subaudienda est nota similitudinis, sicut</i>) in plateis, polluti sunt in sanguine, quia non potuerunt quin contingerent vestes ipsorum (<i>ita lego, nec sine ratione, quia alioe versiones nullo modo conveniunt, ut nun videbimus.</i>)

They who simply read, that the blind had wandered, deduce this meaning, that the blind were polluted in the streets, even because there was filth everywhere. They, indeed, come near to the meaning of the Prophet, but they do not clearly explain what he intended. I regard it therefore beyond dispute, that the people are here compared to the blind, but it does not yet appear for what purpose. But my opinion is this, that the whole city was so full of defilement's, that they could not avoid uncleanness; for a blind man would touch a carcass, he would touch an unclean beast, he would touch a man infected with some disease; how so? because he could not see to distinguish between a dead and a living man, between the clean and unclean. Our Prophet now compares the people to the blind, and why? because wherever they went, uncleanness met them, so that their eyes were in a manner dazzled by thick darkness. For when pestilence does not spread everywhere, we can avoid an unclean place; but when there is no corner where there is not a dead corpse or some sickness, we must pass on anyhow, having no choice to make, — and why? because uncleanness surrounds us everywhere. So, then, the Prophet says that the citizens of Jerusalem were everywhere polluted, as though they were blind.

Now follows the reason, which has not been understood by interpreters, *They were polluted*, he says, *with blood, because they could not but touch their garments.* They all give this version, “They could not touch their garments :” and as there is much obscurity and almost absurdity in this rendering, they say that the meaning is that they were to avoid to touch their garments, because the law forbade them to touch the unclean. But the

Prophet meant another thing. The words are literally thus, “They could not, they will touch their garments, that is, they will inevitably touch their garments. But the particle which I have mentioned is to be understood, and the passage will read thus, *They could not but touch their garments*; and we know that the language will bear this. And as this is consistent with the subject which the Prophet handles, every one, judging rightly, will readily receive what I have stated. The meaning then is, that they *wandered as the blind, and were polluted in all the streets of the city, because they could not escape uncleanness*, which met them everywhere; that is, because the city, as I have said, was full of so many pollutions, that they could not turn either here or there and avoid uncleanness. ^{F94}

As to the words, *polluted with blood*, they refer to the ceremonial law. There were indeed various kinds of pollutions, but this was the chief. He accommodates his expressions to his own age, and follows what was prescribed by the law. He, however, alludes to the sins designated by blood. We, in short, see that the whole of Jerusalem was so polluted with defilements, that no one could go forth without falling on some uncleanness. A confirmation follows, which also interpreters have not understood, —

<250415> Lamentations 4:15	
15. They cried unto them, Depart ye; it is unclean; depart, depart, touch not; when they fled away and wandered, they said among the heathen. They shall no more sojourn there.	15. Discedite, pollutus, clamavit illis; discedite, discedite, ne accedatis: quia evolarunt (<i>aut</i> , festinarunt,) etiam errarunt, dixerant in gentibus, Non adjicient ad Labitandum

The Prophet confirms the former verse, as I have said, even that no part of the city was free from filth, because they cried everywhere, “Depart, depart — unclean!” That what is said may be more evident to us, we must notice that the Prophet alludes (which also has not been perceived) to <031345> Leviticus 13:45. For it is said there of the lepers, whose disease was incurable, that they were to go with rent garments, with a bare head, with covered lips, and cry, “Unclean, unclean, תִּמְאָה תִּמְאָה קְרָא *thema, thema,*

ikora. God, then, would have the leprous to be driven from the assembly; and hence came into use the exclamation, Unclean, unclean, **טמא טמא**, *thema, thema*. But here the Prophet says, “Depart, depart — unclean **טמא סורו סורו**, *suru suru thema*; which is substantially the same as commanded in the law. Now the Prophet speaks metaphorically when he says, that the city was infected with uncleanness, as though lepers were everywhere. We hence see how all these things agree together, “They cried, Depart ye — unclean; depart ye, depart;” that is, no one can move a foot from his house, or go forth in public, but some uncleanness will appear to him, so that it might be rightly exclaimed, *Unclean, depart ye, depart*. The Prophet, after having thus spoken, *Depart ye, come not nigh* says, *they have fled*. It is a striking allusion to the exile of the people, as though he had said, that they were driven afar off by their defilements. As then they were removed to a distant land, he says that this happened through their own fault; how so? because they could no longer endure these defilement’s of their sins; they had so contaminated the holy city, that it was foetid through their filth. As, then, the city Jerusalem was so polluted, the citizens, he says, at length fled away: and thus exile proceeded from themselves, that is, the cause of exile was their filth, because they contaminated the city. *They have fled*, he says, *and have also wandered*; that is, so great was their haste, that they kept not the right way, but turned here and there, as they usually do who hasten with trembling. For when any one travels, and his mind composed, he attends to the road that he may not go astray; but he who trembles, or is filled with fear, forgets the way, and wanders from the right course. So, then, our Prophet. now says, that the Jews *fled* and also *wandered*; for he uses the particle **גַּם**, *gam*, also; they also wandered, he says, even through that trepidation by which they were smitten.

They have said among the nations, They shall not return to dwell; that is, they are scattered and driven among various nations without hope of returning.

We now see what the Prophet meant to show, even that the Jews had no reason to complain of their exile, because they had so infected the holy city with their vices, that they were hence driven by their own filth; this is one thing; and, then, that so great was the mass of their evils, that they were seized with fear; and thus they did not keep on the right way, but

turned into devious paths and met darkness; and, in the last place, he adds, as a continuation of what he had said, that there was no hope of a return.

<250416> Lamentations 4:16	
16. The anger of the Lord hath divided them; he will no more regard them: they respected not the persons of the priests, they favored not the elders.	16. Facies Jehovae divisit (vel, dissipavit) eos; non adjiciet ad respiciendum eos; faciem sacerdotum non reveriti sunt (vel honore persecuti,) et senum non fuerunt miserti.

He explains himself by saying, that they had been scattered from the face of Jehovah. He had said, that they had fled into foreign lands, and that they believed their exile to be perpetual; he now assigns the reason that God had thus banished them. But he had promised by Moses, that though they were dispersed through the four quarters of the world, he would yet be propitious to them, so as to gather them when dispersed, as it is said in the Psalms, “He will gather the dispersed of Israel.” (<053004> Deuteronomy 30:4; <19E702> Psalm 147:2.) And we know that the time of exile had been prefixed; for the Prophet had often testified that God would at length become a deliverer to his people, so as to stretch forth again his hand, and draw them forth from Chaldea as he did from Egypt: how then does he say, that they had been scattered from the face of Jehovah, and then, that they had been so rejected, that he would not favor them hereafter with his paternal countenance? the obvious answer is this, that the Prophet here regards only the extremely dispersed state of the people. For though the promise of God as to their return was certain and clear, yet, when any one cast his eyes on the state of things at that time, he could have hoped no such thing; for the desolation, the ground of despair, was immense: no name had remained for the people, the priesthood had been extinguished, the royal dignity had been degraded, the city also and the Temple had been completely overthrown. As, then, there was nothing remaining as to the nation and the place, and also as to God’s worship, how could they do otherwise than despond?

Then the Prophet, viewing the desolation, says, that nothing else could be concluded, but that the Jews would be perpetually exiles, and that all the

ways were closed up, to prevent them to return to their country, and also that the eyes of God were shut, so as never to look on them. We now, then, perceive what he means by saying, that they were *scattered from the face of Jehovah*, so that he should no longer look on them. And this mode of speaking is often found in Scripture; for, on the one hand, it; sets before us the wrath of God, which brings death; and then on the other, it sustains us, or when we are fallen it raises us up, by setting before us the favor of God even in death itself.

The Prophet, then, considers now no other thing than the dreadful calamity which was sufficient to sink the minds of all into the lowest abyss of despair.

He then adds, that they *respected not the face of the priests, and shewed no pity to the elders*. Some think that the reason is given why God had so severely punished the people, even because they had despised the aged and the priests; but this is a forced view. I, then, have no doubt but that the Prophet here intimates, that the Jews had been treated reproachfully, so that there had been no account made of the aged, and no respect shewn to the priests. It is, indeed, true, that Daniel was held in great repute; but he speaks here of the priests who had impiously despised all sound doctrine; and he speaks of the aged who were in authority when the kingdom was yet standing. He then says that they had been, as it were, trodden under feet. He hence concludes, that, all hope of restoration was taken away from the Jews, if they only considered their extreme calamity. He afterwards adds, —

<250417> **Lamentations 4:17**

17. As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain help: in our watching we have watched for a nation that could not save us.

17. Adhue nobis (*hoc est quum adhuc staremus; sic intreporetur; quidam exponunt, nobis expectantibus, sed male, meo iudicio; quum ergo adhuc staremus,*) defecerunt oculi nostri ad auxilium nostrum vanum; in expectatione nostra expectavimus (*vel, in speculatione nostra respeximus*) ad gentem quae non servaret.

Here the Prophet charges the people with another crime, that neglecting God, and even despising his favor, they had always attached themselves to vain and false hopes. And this was a sacrilege not to be endured, because they thus robbed God of his rights: and what does he demand more than that we should depend on him, and that our minds should acquiesce in him alone? When, therefore, salvation is expected from others rather than from God alone, he is, in a manner, reduced to nothing. The Prophet, then, accuses the Jews of this great, sacrilege, that they never betook themselves to God, nor had any hope in him, but on the contrary wandered here and there for help.

As yet for us, he says, that, is, while we were yet standing.^{F95} And this circumstance deserves to be noticed; for after the Jews had been overthrown, they at length began to know how they had been previously deceived, when they placed confidence in the Egyptians. Prosperity inebriates men, so that they take delight in their own vanities: and while we seem to ourselves to stand, or while we remain alive, God is disregarded, and we seek help here and there, and think our safety beyond all danger. The Prophet then says, that the Jews had been inebriated with false confidence, so that they disregarded God, and in the meantime fled to the Egyptians. *When*, he says, *we were standing, our eyes failed*, etc. We have before seen what this phrase means: the eyes are said to fail, when with unwearied perseverance we pursue a hope to the last, as it is said in the Psalms,

“Our eyes have failed for the living God,” (<196903> Psalm 69:3;)

that is, We have persevered, and though many trials may have wearied us, yet we have been constant in our hope in God. So now the Prophet says, that the eyes of the people had failed; but he adds, for a vain help, or a help of vanity, by which term he designates the Egyptians: and there is an implied contrast between empty and fallacious help and the help of God, which the people rejected when they preferred the Egyptians. *Our eyes*, he says, *failed*, that is, we were unwearied in hoping vainly, for we always thought that the Egyptians would be a sufficient, defense to us. This is one thing.

He afterwards adds, *In our looking out, we looked out to a nation which could not save us*. He repeats the same thing in other words. Some consider a relative to be understood, “In our expectation with which we

have expected,” etc.; but it seems not necessary. I, then, so connect the words of the Prophet, that the meaning is, that the Jews always turned their eyes to Egypt, as long as they stood as a state and kingdom and thus they willfully deceived themselves, because they took delight in their own vanity. The other clause which follows has the same meaning, *In our expectation we expected a nation*, etc.; and this clause is added as an explanation; for the Prophet explains how their eyes failed for a vain hope, or for a vain help, even because the people did not look to God, but only to the Egyptians.

Now the words, to look out and looking out, are not unsuitable, for they refer to those vain imaginations to which the unbelieving give heed; for God called them, but turning away from him they transferred their hope to the Egyptians. It was, then, their own looking out or speculation, when, through a foolish conceit, they imagined that safety would be secured to them by the Egyptians.

He says that they were a *nation which could not save*; and there is no doubt but that the Prophet here puts them in mind of the many warnings which had not been received by the Jews, for God had tried to call them back from that ruinous confidence, but without any success; for we know how much the Prophets labored in this respect, but they were never believed until at length experience proved how vain was the help of Egypt, as God had testified by his servants.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are beset on every side with so many allurements, and as Satan ceases not to draw us here and there by vain flatteries, — O grant that we may recumb on thee alone, even on thy power, and, in short, on thy word, nor doubt but thou wilt be our deliverer, whatever may happen, and that we may always so seek thee in our straits, and so acquiesce in the faithfulness of thy promises, that we may calmly sustain all the assaults of afflictions, until thou at length gatherest us into that blessed rest which is prepared for us in heaven by Christ our Lord.
— Amen.

LECTURE SIXTEENTH

<250418> **Lamentations 4:18**

18. They hunt our steps.
That we cannot go in our
streets: our end is near, our
days are fulfilled; for our end
is come.

18. Venati sunt gressus nostros ne
ambularemus in compitis nostris;
appropinquavit finis noster, impleti
sunt dies nostri, certe venit finis noster

Many apply this verse to the Egyptians, that they insidiously enticed the Jews to flee to them in their difficulties. It is indeed, true, that the Jews had been deceived by their false promises; and, as a harlot draws to herself young men by wicked arts, so also the Jews had been captivated by the enticements of the Egyptians. But the meaning of the Prophet seems to be different, even this, — that the Chaldeans followed the Jews as hunters, so that they observed their footsteps; and I connect together the two verses, for it immediately follows, —

<250419> **Lamentations 4:19**

19. Our persecutors are swifter
than the eagles of the heaven:
they pursued us upon the
mountains, they laid wait for us
in the wilderness.

19. Velociores fucrunt
persequutores nostri aquilis
coelorum; super montes
insequuti sunt nos, in deserto
insidiati sunt nobis

Here, then, the Prophet means, that the Jews were so straitened, that there was no escape for them, because their steps were observed by their enemies, and also because the Chaldeans had recourse to the greatest celerity, that they might take them.

He then, says, first, that their enemies were like hunters, for the Jews could not go even through the streets of their own city. We know that they were reduced to the greatest straits; but how hard the siege was is better expressed by this similitude, even that they dared not walk through the city; for there is an implied comparison, as though he had said, “We had no

liberty in the very city, much less were we allowed to go out and ramble through the open fields.” he, in the second place, adds what corresponds with the first clause, *Approach did our end, fulfilled were our days; surely come did our end.*^{F96} He concludes, that no hope remained since their enemies were thus oppressing them. He, then, infers that the end was at hand, by which he means final ruin or destruction; and he adds, that the days were fulfilled, where, he seems to compare the state of Jerusalem with the life of man; for he is said to have fulfilled his day who leaves the world — for a certain time for our sojourn has been prefixed. God, when it pleases him, calls us to himself. Hence, our time is then fulfilled, as our course is said to be finished; for, as the life of man is compared in Scripture to a race, so death is like the goal. So now, speaking of the city, the Prophet says that its time was fulfilled, for it was not God’s will that it should remain any longer. In the third place, he says, that the end had come. He said before, that it was nigh, but he says now, that it had come. he, in short, shows that God, having long spared the Jews, when he saw that they made no end of sinning, at length had recourse to rigor, for they had shamefully abused his forbearance; for he had long suspended his judgment, and had often tried whether they were healable. The Prophet, then, reproves now their obstinacy, when he says that their *end had come*, and that their *time was fulfilled*.

He afterwards, for the same purpose, adds, that *swifter than eagles had been their persecutors* or pursuers. The Prophet, no doubt, continues the same subject. As, then, he had made the Chaldeans to be like hunters, so he says now, that in flying they exceeded the eagles. It is, indeed, a hyperbolical expression, but the Prophet could not otherwise express the incredible celerity with which the Chaldeans hastened in pursuing the Jews. Nor is there a doubt but that he indirectly derided the security of the foolish people; for we know, that, whenever the prophets threatened them, this false opinion ever prevailed, that the Chaldeans would not come, because they were far away, the journey was long and difficult, time were many hinderances. The Prophet, then, now taunts them for this confidence, by which they had been deceived, when he says, that swifter titan the eagles of the heavens were their enemies.

He mentions the ways they adopted, *Through the mountains they pursued, and laid in wait in the desert*. He means that every way of escape was closed up. For when enemies come, many hide themselves on mountains

and thus escape; and others, betaking themselves to the desert, find there some hiding-places. But the Prophet says that such was the velocity of the Chaldeans, that the Jews in vain looked to the mountains or to deserts, for snares were everywhere prepared, and they were present everywhere to pursue them. Thus he confirms what he had said, that the time was fulfilled, for the Lord kept them shut up on every side.

Now, though the Prophet speaks here of the ruin of the city, yet we may gather a useful doctrine: When the hand of God is against us, we in vain look around in all directions, for there will be no safety for us on mountains, nor will solitude protect us in the desert. As, then, we see that the Jews were closed up by God’s hand, so when we contend with him, we in vain turn our eyes here and there; for, however we may for a time entertain good hopes, yet God will surely at last disappoint us. It follows,

—

<250420> Lamentations 4:20	
20. The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.	20. Spritus narium nostrarum Christus Jehovae captus est laqueis ipsorum; de quo diximus, In umbra ejus vivemus inter gentes.

This verse, as I have said elsewhere, has been ignorantly applied to Josiah, who fell in battle long before the fall of the city. The royal dignity continued after his death; he was himself buried in the grave of his fathers; and though the enemy was victorious, yet he did not conic to the city. It is then absurd to apply to that king what is here properly said of Zedekiah, the last king; for though he was wholly unlike Josiah, yet he was one of David’s posterity, and a type of Christ.

As it was, then, God’s will that the posterity of David should represent Christ, Zedekiah is here rightly called the Christ of Jehovah, by which term Scripture designates all kings, and even Saul; and though his kingdom was temporary, and soon decayed, yet he is called “the Anointed of Jehovah;” and doubtless the anointing, which he received by the hand of Samuel, was not altogether in vain. But David is properly called the Anointed of Jehovah, together with his posterity. Hence he often used

these words, “Look on thy Christ.” (<198410> Psalm 84:10.) And when Hannah in her song spoke of the Christ of Jehovah, she had no doubt a regard to this idea. (<090210> 1 Samuel 2:10.) And, at length, our Lord was called the Christ of the Lord, for so Simeon called him. (<420226> Luke 2:26.)

Now, then, we perceive that this passage cannot be understood except of king Zedekiah. It ought at the same time to be added, that he is called the Christ of Jehovah, because his crown was not as yet cast down, but he still bore that diadem by which he had been adorned by God. As, then, the throne of David still remained, Zedekiah, however unworthy he was of that honor, was yet the Christ of Jehovah, as Manasseh was, and others who were wholly degenerated.

The Prophet, however, seems to ascribe to Zedekiah far more than he deserved, when he calls the life of the people. But this difficulty may be easily removed; the man himself is not regarded according to his merits, but as he was called by God, and endued with that high and singular honor; for we know that what is here said extended to all the posterity of David, —

“I have made him the first-begotten among all the kings
of the earth.” (<198927> Psalm 89:27.)

For though the kings of the earth obtained not their authority, except as they were established by God’s decree, yet the king from David’s posterity was first-begotten among them all. In short, it was a sacerdotal, and even a sacred kingdom, because God had peculiarly dedicated that throne to himself. This peculiarity ought then to be borne in mind, that we may not look on the individual in himself.

Then the passage runs consistently, when he says, that the *Messiah*, or the anointed *of Jehovah, had been taken in snares*; for we know that he was taken; and this is consistent with history. He had fled by a hidden way into the desert, and he thought that he had escaped from the hands of his enemies; but he was soon seized, and brought to king Nebuchadnezzar. As, then, he had unexpectedly fallen into the hands of his enemies, rightly does the Prophet say metaphorically, that he was taken in their snares.

He calls him the *spirit of the nostrils* of the people, because the people without their king was like a mutilated and an imperfect body. For God made David king, and also his posterity, for this end, that the life of the people might in a manner reside in him. As far, then, as David was the

head of the people, and so constituted by God, he was even their life. The same was the case with all his posterity, as long as the succession continued; for the favor of God was not extinguished until all liberty vanished, when the city was destroyed, and even the name of the people was as it were abolished. ^{F97}

But we must observe what we have before said, that these high terms in which the posterity of David were spoken of, properly belong to Christ only; for David was not the life of the people, except as he was the type of Christ, and represented his person. Then what is said was not really found in the posterity of David, but only typically. Hence the truth, the reality, is to be sought in no other but in Christ. And we hence learn that the Church is dead, and is like a maimed body, when separated from its head. If, then, we desire to live before God, we must come to Christ, who is really the spirit or the breath of our nostrils; for as man that is dead does no longer breathe, so also we are said to be dead when separated from Christ. On the other hand, as long as there is between him and us a sacred union, though our life is hid, and we die, yet we live in him, and though we are dead to the world, yet our life is in heaven, as also Paul and Peter call us thither. (<⁵¹⁰³⁰³> Colossians 3:3, 4; <⁶¹⁰³¹⁶> 2 Peter 3:16.) In short, Jeremiah means that the favor of God was as it were extinguished when the king was taken away, because the happiness of the people depended on the king, and the royal dignity was as it were a sure pledge of the grace and favor of God; hence the blessing of God ceased, when the king was taken away from the Jews.

It follows at length, *Of whom we have said, Under thy shadow we shall live among the nations.* The Prophet shews that the Jews in vain hoped for anything any more as to their restoration; for the origin of all blessing was from the king. God had bereaved them of their king; it then follows that they were in a hopeless state. But the Prophet that he might more clearly express this, says, that the people thought that they would be safe, provided the kingdom remained, — *We shall live*, they said, *even among the nations under the shadow of our king*; that is, “Though we may be driven to foreign nations, yet the king will be able to gather us, and his shadow will extend far and wide to keep us safe.” So the Jews believed, but falsely, because by their defection they had cast away the yoke of Christ and of God, as it is said in <¹⁹⁰²⁰³> Psalm 2:3. As then they had shaken off the heavenly yoke, they in vain trusted in the shadow of an

earthly king, and were wholly unworthy of the guardianship and protection of God.^{F98} It afterwards follows, —

<250421> Lamentations 4:21	
21. Rejoice, and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz: the cup also shall pass through unto thee; thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked.	21. Guade et laetare, filia Edom quae habitas in terra Uts (עֲזָ, <i>ad verbum</i> ;) etiam super te transibit calix, inebriaberis et nudaberis.

The Prophet in this verse intimates that the Jews were exposed to the reproaches and taunts of all their enemies, but he immediately moderates their sorrow, by adding a consolation; and it was a sorrow that in itself must have been very bitter; for we know that nothing’ is harder to bear, in a state of misery, than the petulant insults of enemies; these wound us more than all other evils which we may suffer. The Prophet then intimates, that the Jews had been so reduced, that all the ungodly and malevolent were able, with impunity, to exult over them, and to taunt them with their troubles. This is done in the former clause but its it was a prophecy, or rather a denunciation, extremely bitter, he mitigates the atrocity of the evil, when he says that their enemies would have soon in their turn to undergo punishment.

Some explain the whole verse as spoken ironically, as though the Prophet had said tauntingly, — “Go now, ye Idumeans, and rejoice; but your joy shall be evanescent.”^{F99} But I rather think that he refers to the very summit of extreme misery, because the Jews had been thus exposed to the taunts of their enemies; but he afterwards adds some alleviation, because all their enemies would at length be punished. There is, in <330708> Micah 7:8, a similar mode of speaking, though there is no mention made there of Edom; for there the Prophet speaks generally to all those who envied the people, and were their adversaries: he compares the people, according’ to what was usual, to a woman; and we know that in that sex there is much more jealousy than in men; and then, when there is a grudge, they fiercely urge their pleas, that they may have an occasion to speak evil of others. Therefore the Church, after having acknowledged that she had been deservedly chastised, adds, “Rejoice not over me, mine enemy.” But I have

already fully explained the Prophet's meaning, — that the Church calls all her enemies an enemy, or an inimical woman, as though there had been some quarrel or jealousy between women. Hence she says,

“Though I have fallen, yet rejoice thou not, my enemy; though I lie in darkness, yet the Lord will be my light — though then my enemy has rejoiced, yet my eyes shall see when she shall be trodden down.” (<30708> Micah 7:8, 10.)

The Prophet no doubt meant there to mitigate the sorrow of the godly, who saw that they were insolently taunted by all their neighbors. He then shews the necessity of a patient endurance for a time; for God would at length stretch out his hand, and render to enemies the reward of their barbarity.

But why in this place mention is made of Edom, rather than of other nations, is not evident. The Jews were, indeed, surrounded on every side with enemies, for they had as many enemies as neighbors. But the Idumeans, above others, had manifested hostility to the chosen people. And the indignity was the greater, because they had descended from the same father, for Isaac was their common father; and they derived their origin from two brothers, Esau and Jacob. As, then, the Idumeans were related to the Jews, their cruelty was less tolerable; for they thus forgot their own race, and raged against their brethren and relatives. Hence it is said in <19D707> Psalm 137:7,

“Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom, who said, in the day of Jerusalem, Down with it, down with it, to the very foundation.”

The Prophet, then, after having imprecated God's vengeance on all the ungodly, mentioned especially the Idumeans; and why? because they indulged their cruelty above all others; for they were standard-bearers, as it were, to enemies, and were like falls, by which the fire was more kindled; for this address was no doubt made to the Chaldeans,

“Make bare, make bare; spare not;
let not a stone remain on a stone.” (<19D707> Psalm 137:7.)

As, then, the Idumeans had behaved most cruelly towards their own relatives, the Prophet complains of them, and asks God to render to them what they deserved.

So now in this place our Prophet says, *Be glad and rejoice, thou daughter of Edom, who dwellest in the land of Uz.* By this clause, as I have already said, Jeremiah intimates that the Jews were exposed to the taunts of their enemies, because the Idumeans could now insult them with security. But he immediately adds, *also*: here he begins a new subject, and this is intimated by the particle **גַּם** *gam*, *To thee also shall pass the cup.* He employs a common metaphor; for adversity is denoted in Scripture by the word cup; for God, according to his will, gives to drink to each as much as he pleases. As when a master of a family distributes drink to his children and servants; so also God, in a manner, extends his cup to every one whom he chastises; nor does he allow any one either to reject the cup offered, .or to throw away the wine, but he constrains him to drink and to exhaust to the very dregs as much as he gives to each to drink. Hence it is for this reason that the Prophet says now that the cup would pass over to the Idumeans; for we know that, shortly after, they were subdued by the Chaldeans, with whom they had before been united. But when they had by their perfidy fallen off from their treaty, they were in their turn punished. As, then, the agreement they had made with the Chaldeans did not continue, the Prophet says, that to them also the cup would pass over.

He adds, *Thou shalt be inebriated and made naked.* God is wont thus to distinguish between his own children and aliens or the reprobate; for he indeed gives a bitter potion to his own children to drink, but it is as much as they are able to drink; but he altogether chokes others, because he constrains them, as it has been already said, to drink to the very dregs. So, then, the Prophet now compares the extreme miseries which the Idumeans suffered to drunkenness; and to the same purpose are the words which follow, *Thou shalt be made naked.* For he thus intimates, that they would be so confounded with the atrocity of their evils, as to have no care for decency, and to be dead to all shame: as a drunken man, who is overpowered by wine, disregards himself, and falls and exposes himself as Noah did; so also the Prophet says, that so great would be the calamities of Edom, that the people, exposed to every reproach, would afford occasion to all around them for taunts. As when a sot lies down in the mire, casts away his garments, and makes an exposure of himself, it is a spectacle both sad and shameful; so the Prophet says, that the Idumeans would be like the drunken, because they would lie down in their reproach. It follows, —

<250422> **Lamentations 4:22**

22. The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity: he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will discover they sins.

22. Completa est iniquitas tua, filia Sion; non adjiciet ad te in exilium trahendam; visitavit iniquitatem filiae Edom, et discooperuit super peccatum tuum (*hoc est, nudavit peccatum tuum.*)

This verse, in my judgment, is incorrectly explained; and the Jews have toiled much, for there seems to be a kind of inconsistency, since it is certain that they were afterwards scattered into exile, not only once, but several times. Hence they interpret. this place of the second dispersion by Titus, under the authority of his father Vespasian. They then say that the iniquity of the people was then completed, for after that exile no change has followed. Otherwise they do not think that this prediction of the Prophet accords with the reality or the event; for, as I have said, they have been driven into all lands. They had been, indeed, before fugitives, as Moses had declared concerning them. For we know that Jews dwelt in Greece and in Macedonia; we know that many of the cities of Italy were full of this people, until by the edict of Claudius Caesar they were expelled from Italy; for he thought that Italy was infected by them, and he drove them afar off, as though they were contagious. But the Jews lay hold on these refinements to no purpose for the Prophet simply meant to say, that such would be, the punishment of the people, that it would not be necessary then to repeat it.

When, therefore, he says that *their iniquity*, or the punishment of their iniquity, *was completed*, he intimates that God had dealt so severely with them, that there was nothing short of extreme rigor: and this mode of speaking occurs elsewhere. To the same purpose is what immediately follows: The enemy, or God, which is the same, *will no more add to draw thee into exile*, — why? for what need was there of a second exile when the whole land had been reduced to solitude? since also the poor who had been left in the land had at length gone into Egypt, whence they were brought again into Chaldea; but they were, at the time, fugitives from the Holy Land. Then the Prophet means, that God's judgment was, in all its parts,

completed, that nothing short of extreme calamity had happened to the Jews.

It afterwards follows in the second clause, *He will visit*, which is, indeed, in the past tense, *he hath visited*, but he speaks of what was future.

According to the usual manner of the prophets, in order to confirm the prediction, he speaks of the event as already past, He has visited the iniquity of the daughter of Edom; so that thy wickedness has been uncovered. The meaning will be clearer if we add the particles of comparison, “As thy punishment, daughter of Sion, has been completed; so thine iniquity, daughter of Edom, shall be visited;” or if we render the words thus, by way of concession, “The punishment of thine iniquity, daughter of Sion, has indeed been completed; but thy sin, daughter of Edom, shall be uncovered.” ^{F100}

We, in short, see that the reason is explained why the Prophet, in the last verse, alleviated, with comfort, the sorrow of the people, that though the Jews were very miserable, it would yet be nothing better with Edom, when the time of visitation came. And in saying that the punishment of iniquity was completed, he refers not to their sin, but says that they had been thus chastised, as it seemed good to God to execute all his rigor towards them; and nearly the same manner of speaking is found in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah. Then the Prophet does not deny but that the Jews might at a future time become exiles; but he says that their transmigration now was complete, so that it was not necessary that Nebuchadnezzar should again denude the land of its inhabitants: this had been done, as it were, by a sudden whirlwind; for by one sweep they had been snatched away. The land, indeed, was before made desolate, but when Nebuchadnezzar took possession of the city, he only left behind the dregs of the people. And he did this on purpose that he might have there some people as tributaries. Then that transmigration was complete.

But the Prophet means not here, that God would not afterwards banish and scatter the Jews as they deserved. There is then no inconsistency, that the Jews afterwards became fugitives and wanderers through the whole world, and that yet the enemy would not again draw them into captivity, for he speaks here only of the Chaldeans: and this was said, because Jeremiah wished to compare the Jews with the Idumeans, and to shew, that though the Idumeans insolently exulted over them, yet their own

calamity was nigh, which would wholly overwhelm them, as the case had previously been with the Jews. There is no time now to begin with the prayer of Jeremiah: I must therefore defer it till the next Lecture.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou seest that at this day the mouths not only of our enemies, but of thine also, are open to speak evil, — O grant, that no occasion may be given them, especially as their slanders are cast on thy holy name; but restrain thou their insolence, and so spare us, that though we deserve to be chastised, thou mayest yet have regard for thine own glory, and thus gather us under Christ our head, and restore thy scattered Church, until we shall at length be all gathered into that celestial kingdom, which thine only-begotten Son our Lord has procured for us by his own blood. — Amen.

CHAPTER 5

LECTURE SEVENTEETH

<250501> Lamentations 5:1	
1. Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach.	1. Memento (recordare,) Jehova, quid sit nobis (<i>hoc est</i> , quomodo nobiscum agatur.) aspice et vide opprobrium nostrum.

This prayer ought to be read as unconnected with the Lamentations, for the initial letters of the verses are not written according to the order of the Alphabet. yet it is a complaint rather than a prayer; for Jeremiah mentions those things which had happened to the people in their extreme calamity in order to turn God to compassion and mercy.

He says first, *Remember* what has happened to us; and then in the second part he explains himself, *Look and see our reproach*. Now the words, though brief and concise, yet contain a useful doctrine — that God is pleased to bring help to the miserable when their evils come to an account before him, especially when they are unjustly oppressed. It is, indeed, certain that nothing is unknown to God, but this mode of speaking is according to the perceptions of men; for we think that God disregards our miseries, or we imagine that his back is turned to us when he does not immediately succor us. But as I have said, he is simply to be asked to look on our evils, for we know what he testifies of himself; so that as he claims to himself the office of helping the miserable and the unjustly oppressed, we ought to acquiesce in this consolation, that as soon as he is pleased to look on the evils we suffer, aid is at the same time prepared for us.

There is mention especially made of reproach, that the indignity might move God the more: for it was for this end that he took the people under his protection, that they might be for his glory and honor, as Moses says. As, then, it was God's will that the riches of his glory should appear in that people, nothing could have been more inconsistent that that instead of

glory they should have nothing but disgrace and reproach. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet makes a special mention of the reproach of the people. It follows, —

<250502> Lamentations 5:2	
2. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens.	2. Haereditas nostra devoluta est ad exteros, domus nostrae ad alienos.

A catalogue of many calamities is now given by the Prophet, and as I have reminded you, for this end, that he may obtain God’s favor for himself and for the whole people. It was by no means a reasonable thing, that the inheritance of the elect people should be given to aliens; for we know that the land had been promised to Abraham four hundred years before his children possessed it; we know that this promise had been often repeated, “This land shall be to you for an inheritance.” For though God sustained all nations, yet he was pleased to take a peculiar care of his people. In short, no land has ever been given to men in so singular a way as the land of Canaan to the posterity of Abraham. As, then, this inheritance had been for so many ages possessed by the chosen people, Jeremiah does not without reason complain that it was turned over to aliens.

In the second clause he repeats the same thing; but he shews that the Jews had not only been robbed of their fields, but had been cast out of their houses, a more grievous and disgraceful thing. For it sometimes happens, that when one loses his farm, his fields, and vineyards, his house remains to him untouched; but the Prophet here amplifies the misery of his own nation, that they were not only deprived of their fields and possessions, but that they were also ejected from their own houses, and others had possession of them. For it is a sight deemed affecting even among heathens, when one unworthy of any honor succeeds in the place of another eminent in wealth and dignity. Well known are these words, —

O house of Aucus! How ruled by an unequal master! ^{F101}

As Tarquinius had succeeded and taken possession of the kingdom, the heathen poet upbraidingly said that the house of Ancus had passed over to those who were at first exiles and fugitives, but afterwards became proud and cruel tyrants. So also in this place Jeremiah says that aliens dwelt in the houses of the people. It follows, —

<250503> **Lamentations 5:3**

3. We are orphans and fatherless,
our mothers are as widows.

3. Pupilli fuimus patre (non
patre,) matres nostrae tanquam
viduae.

Here the Prophet not only speaks in the person of the whole people, but utters also the groans and complaints of each; for this could not have been suitable to the whole Church, as he speaks of fathers and mothers. We hence see that this verse does not apply to the whole body, but to individual members, though every one of the people might have said that widows and orphans were everywhere seen.

Now, this usually happens when a nation is consumed either by pestilence or by war; for in one battle all do not so fall that a whole country becomes full of orphans. But the Prophet sets forth here the orphanage and widowhood occasioned through the continued vengeance of God, for he had not ceased to afflict the people until by degrees they were exhausted. It was, indeed, a sad spectacle to see among the chosen people so many widows, and also so many children deprived of their fathers. It, follows,

—

<250504> **Lamentations 5:4**

4. We have drunken our
water for money; our
wood is sold unto us.

4. Aquas nostras pecunia bibimus, ligna
nostra pretio veniunt (*non veneunt, nam
intelligit ligna offerri, aut venire in illorum
manus non sine pretio.*)

The Prophet here relates, that the people were denuded, that. they labored under the want of water and of wood. He does not say that they were only deprived of corn and wine, he does not complain that any of their luxuries were lessened; but he mentions water and wood, the common things of life; for the use of water, as it is said, is common to all; no one is so poor, if he dwells not in a land wholly dry, but that he has water enough to drink. For if there be no fountains, there are at least rivers, there are wells; nor do men perish through thirst, except in deserts and in places uninhabitable. As, then, water might be had everywhere, the Prophet here sets forth the

extreme misery of the people, for water was even sold to them. In stony and high places water is sold; but this is a very rare thing. The Prophet here means that the people were not only deprived of their wealth, but reduced to such a state of want that they had no water without buying it,.

At the same time he seems to express something worse when he says, *Our water we drink for money*, and our *wood is brought to us for a price*. It is not strange that wood should be bought; but the Prophet means that water was sold to the Jews which had been their own, and that they were also compelled to buy wood which had been their own. Thus the possessive pronouns are to be considered as emphatical. Then he says, “Our own waters we drink,” etc. ^{F102} He calls them the waters of the people, which by right they might have claimed as their own; and he also calls the wood The same; it was that to which the people had a legitimate right. He then says that all things had been so taken away by their enemies, that they were forced to buy, not only the wine which had been taken from their cellars, and the corn which had been taken from their granaries, but also the water and the wood.

But were any one disposed to take the words more simply, the complaint would not. be unsuitable, — that the people, who before had abundance of wine and all other things, were constrained to buy everything, even water and wood. For it is a grievous change when any one, who could once cut wood of his own, and gather his own wine and corn, is not able to get even a drop of water without buying it. This is a sad change. So this passage may be understood. It follows, —

<250505> Lamentations 5:5	
5. Our necks are under persecution: we labor, and have no rest	5. Super colla nostra (<i>vel</i> , cervicibus nostris) persecutionem passi sumus; laboravimus non requies nobis.

Here he says that the people were oppressed with a grievous bondage. It is, indeed, a metaphorical expression when he says, that people suffered persecution on their necks. Enemies may sometimes be troublesome to us, either before our face, or behind our backs, or by our sides; but when they so domineer as to ride on our necks, in this kind of insult. there is extreme degradation. Hence the Prophet here complains of the servile and even

disgraceful oppression of the people when he says, that the Jews *suffered persecution on their necks*.

The meaning is, that the enemies so domineered at the, it pleasure, that the Jews dared not to raise up their heads. They were, indeed, worthy of this reward — for we know that they had an iron neck; for when God would have them to bear his yoke, they were wholly unbending; nay, they were like untameable wild beasts. As, then, their hardness had been so great, God rendered to them a just reward for their pride and obstinacy, when their enemies laid such a burden on their necks ^{F103}

But the Prophet sets forth here this indignity, that he might turn God to mercy; that is, that the Chaldeans thus oppressed as they pleased the chosen people.

He adds, that they *labored and had no rest*. He intimates by these words that there were no limits nor end to their miseries and troubles; for the phrase in Hebrew is, *We have labored and there was no rest*. It often happens that when one is pressed down with evils for a short time, a relaxation comes. But the Prophet. says that there was no end to the miseries of the people. Then to labor without rest is the same as to be pressed down with incessant afflictions, from which there is no outlet. Their obstinacy was worthy also of this reward, for they had fought against God, not for a few months or years only, but for many years. We know how long the Prophet called them without any success. Here, however, he seeks favor with God, by saying that the people were miserable without limits or end.

<250506> **Lamentations 5:6**

6. We have given the hand to the Egyptians and to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.

6. AEgyptiis dedimus manum Assyriis, ut saturemur panibus.

He speaks here of the mendicity of the people, that they sought bread from every quarter. To give the hand, is explained in three ways: some say that it means humbly to ask; others, to make an agreement; and others, to extend it in token of misery, as he who cannot ask for help, intimates his wants by extending his hand. But the Prophet seems simply to mean that

the people were so distressed by want, that they begged bread. I then take the expression, to give the hand, as meaning that they asked bread, as beggars usually do.

He now says that they *gave* or extended *the hand* both to the *Egyptians* and to the *Assyrians*, which was a most unworthy and disgraceful thing; for the Egyptians had been their most troublesome enemies, and the Assyrians afterwards followed their example. At that time, indeed, the Egyptians pretended to be the friends of the chosen people, and made a treaty with them; but the Jews were held in contempt by them as they deserved, for they had prostituted as it were themselves like harlots. As, then, they had been despised by the Egyptians, it was a disgrace and reproach the most bitter, when they were compelled to beg bread in Egypt, and then in Assyria; for this might have been turned to the bitterest taunts.

We now, then, perceive the meaning of the Prophet; even this reward also God justly rendered to them. He had promised them a fruitful land, in which he was ready to support them to the full. How often is mention made by Moses of corn, wine, and oil; and why? in order that God might shew that that land exceeded every other in fertility. It was, then, an evidence of an extreme curse when the people were compelled to beg bread here and there, while yet the abundance of all things ought to have been sufficient to supply even aliens,

“Thou shalt lend to others, but thou shalt not borrow.”
(^{<051506>}Deuteronomy 15:6.)

They then who ought to have fed others by their plenty, were so reduced that their want forced them to undergo this disgrace, to beg bread of the Egyptians and Assyrians. It follows, —

^{<250507>} Lamentations 5:7	
7. Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities.	7. Patres nostri peccarunt, non sunt (non ipsi, ad verbum,) nos vero iniquitatem eorum portavimus.

The Prophet seems here to contend with God, and to utter that blasphemy mentioned by Ezekiel. For when God severely chastised the people, that proverb was commonly used by them,

“Our fathers did eat a sour grape, and our teeth are blunted.”

(^{<261802>} Ezekiel 18:2.)

Thus they intimated that they were unjustly and cruelly treated, because they suffered the punishment of others, when they themselves were innocent. So the Prophet seems to quarrel with God when he says that the *fathers who sinned were no more*; but as we shall presently see, the Prophet confesses also the sins of those who were yet alive. As, then, an ingenuous confession is made by the Prophet, he no doubt abstained here from that blasphemy which is so severely reproved by Ezekiel. Jeremiah had nothing farther from his purpose than to free the people from all blame, as though God had dealt cruelly with them, according to what is said by a heathen poet, —

“For the sins of the fathers thou undeservedly sufferest, O Roman!”^{F104}

Another says, —

“Enough already by our blood

Have we suffered for the perjuries of Laomedonian Troy.”^{F105}

They mean that the people of their age were wholly innocent, and seek in Asia and beyond the sea the cause of evils, as though they never had a sin at Rome. But the meaning of Jeremiah was not this, but he simply intended to say that the people who had been long rebellious against God were already dead, and that it was therefore a suitable time for God to regard the miseries of their posterity. The faithful, then, do not allege here their own innocence before God, as though they were blameless; but only mention that their fathers underwent a just punishment, for that whole generation had perished. Daniel speaks more fully when he says,

“We have sinned, and our fathers, and our kings.”

(^{<270908>} Daniel 9:8.)

He involved in the same condemnation both the fathers and their children.

But our Prophet’s object was different, even to turn God to mercy, as it has been stated; and to attain this object he says, “O Lord, thou indeed

hast hitherto executed just punishment, because our fathers had very long abused thy goodness and forbearance; but now the time is come for thee to try and prove whether we are like our fathers: as, then, they have perished as they deserved, receive us now into favor.” We hence see that thus no quarrel or contention is carried on with God, but only that the miserable exiles ask God to look on them, since their fathers who had provoked God and had experienced his dreadful vengeance, were already dead. ^{F106}

And when he says that the *sons bore the iniquity* of the fathers, though it be a strong expression, yet its meaning is not as though God had without reason punished their children and not their fathers; for unalterable is that declaration,

“The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father the iniquity of the son; but the soul that sinneth it shall die.”
(^{<261820>} Ezekiel 18:20.)

It may yet be said that children are loaded with the sins of their fathers, because God, as he declares by Moses, extends his vengeance to the third and fourth generation. (^{<022005>} Exodus 20:5.) And he says also in another place,

“I will return into the bosom of children the iniquity of their fathers.” (^{<243218>} Jeremiah 32:18.)

God then continued his vengeance to their posterity. But yet there is no doubt but that the children who had been so severely punished, bore also the punishment of their own iniquity, for they deserved a hundred deaths. But these two things well agree together, that God returns the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children, and yet that the children are chastised for their own sins.

^{<250508>} Lamentations 5:8	
8. Servants have ruled over us: there is none that doth deliver us out of their hand.	8. Servi dominati sunt nobis; eripiens nemo ex manibus ipsorum (<i>hoc est, nemo est qui nos eripiat e manibus ipsorum.</i>)

Another circumstance aggravated the calamity of the people, that they came under the power of servants, which is more degrading than when the

rich and the eminent in wealth and power make us their servants. For it is no shame to serve a king, or at, least a man who possesses some eminence; for that servitude which is not apparently degrading is deemed tolerable. But when we become the servants of servants, it is a most afflicting degradation, and most grievously wounds our minds.

It is, then, for this indignity that Jeremiah now expostulates, and says that *servants ruled over them*. There is, indeed, no doubt but that they were driven into exile by some of the lowest; for the Chaldeans thought it right to exercise towards them every kind of cruelty. But it was yet a very mournful thing for God’s children to be the slaves of servants; for they were before a sacerdotal kingdom, and God had so taken them under his protection, that their condition was better and more desirable than that of any other kingdom. As, then, they had been robbed of their liberty, and not only so, but also made subject to servants, the change was sad in the extreme.^{F107} Therefore the Prophet sought another occasion to plead for mercy, when he said that they were ruled by servants. It now follows, —

<250509> Lamentations 5:9	
9. We gat our bread with <i>the peril</i> of our lives, because of the sword of the wilderness.	9. In anima nostra (<i>alii vertunt</i> , in periculo vitae nostrae, <i>vel</i> , cum periculo) adduximus ad panem nostrum ob siccitatem deserti (<i>alii vertunt</i> , a facie gladii, in deserto.)

The word **חרב**, *chereb*, means drought as well as sword. As the Prophet is speaking of famine and the desert,, I have no doubt but that dryness or drought is *sword* the word means here; and I wonder that the word sword had occurred to any; they could not have regarded the context.

He then says that the people sought bread with the soul, that is, at the hazard of their own life. If danger be preferred, I do not object. But as he simply says, with the soul, he seems to express this, that for food they hazarded their own life. Food, indeed, is the support of life, for why is bread sought but for sustaining life? But the hungry so rush headlong to procure food, that they expose themselves to thousand dangers, and they also weary themselves with many labors; and this is to seek bread with their soul, that is, when men not only anxiously labor to procure food, but pour forth as it were their own blood, as when one undertakes a long

journey to get some support, lie is almost lifeless when he reaches the distant hospital. As, then, the Jews nowhere found food, the Prophet says that they sought bread with their life, that is, at the hazard of life. This is the view I prefer.

He then adds, *For the dryness of the wilderness*. What has the sword to do with wilderness? We see that this is wholly unsuitable; there was then no reason why interpreters should pervert this word. But what he calls the dryness of the wilderness was the want by which the people were distressed, as though they were in the wilderness. This is said by way of comparison, — that on account of the dryness of the desert, that is, on account of sterility, they were under the necessity of exposing their life to death, only that they might anywhere find bread. ^{F108}

It may also be, that the Prophet meant, that they were fugitives, and thus went in hunger through woods and forest, when they dared not to go forth into the open country lest the enemy should meet them. But what I have said is most suitable, that is, that they were so famished as though they were in a vast desert, and far away from every hospital, so that bread could nowhere be found. We now, then, perceive the meaning of the Prophet. He adds, —

<250510> Lamentations 5:10	
10. Our skin was black like an oven, because of the terrible famine.	10. Pelles nostrae quasi clibanus nigredinem contraxerunt ob exustiones famis.

Some read, “for tremors;” literally, “from the face of tremors.” Jerome renders it, “tempests :” but the word “burnings” is the most suitable; for he says that their skins were darkened, and he compares them to an oven. This metaphor often occurs in Scripture,

“Though ye have been as among pots in the smoke, and deformed by blackness, yet your wings shall shine.” (<196814> Psalm 68:14.)

God says that his people had contracted blackness, as though they had touched smoky pots, because they had been burnt as it were by many afflictions; for when we pine away in our evils, filthiness itself deforms us. But here he compares to an oven (which is the same thing) their skins or

skin. He then says that the skin of every one was so wrinkled and darkened by blackness, that it was like an oven which is black through constant fire and smoke. The Prophet or whoever was the author of the 119th Psalm, uses another comparison, that he was like a bottle or a bladder, contracted by the smoke, and had wrinkles together with blackness. ^{F109}

The meaning is, that there was a degrading deformity in the people, for they were so famished that no moisture remained in them; and when moisture fails, then paleness and decay follow; and then from paleness a greater deformity and blackness, of which the Prophet now speaks. Hence I have said, that the word “burnings” is the most proper. For, if we say tempests or storms, a tempest does not certainly darken the skin; and if we render it tremors or tremblings, this would be far remote; but if we adopt the word burnings, the whole passage will appear consistent; and we know, that as food as it were irrigates the life of man, so famine burns it up, as Scripture speaks also elsewhere. It follows, —

<div><250511> Lamentations 5:11</div>	
11. They ravished the women in Zion, and the maids in the cities of Judah	11. Mulieres in Sion afflictæ fuerunt virgines in urbibus Juhudah

He mentions here another kind of reproach, that women had been ravished in Jerusalem, and in other cities. ^{F110} God had commanded chastity to be observed among his people. When, therefore, virgins and women were thus defiled, it was a thing extremely disgraceful. But the Prophet mentioned this also, in order that God might at length show himself propitious to his people after having been entreated. (^{<052221>} Deuteronomy 22:21-24.)

And he mentioned *Sion* rather than Jerusalem, — it was indeed to state a part for the whole; but that place, we know, had been chosen by God that his name might be there worshipped. Sion, then, was a holy place above any other; it was, in a word, the earthly dwelling of God. As, then, God had there his palace, that he might dwell in the midst of his people, it was a disgraceful sight in the extreme to see women ravished there, for the temple of God was thus violated. It was not only a thing disgraceful to the people, that women were thus ravished, but it was a filthy profanation of

God’s worship, and therefore sacrilegious. We now see the design of the Prophet. He mentions also the cities of Judah, but with reference to the same thing. It follows —

<250512> Lamentations 5:12	
12. Princes are hanged up by their hand: the faces of elders were not honored	12. Principes manu sua fuerunt suspensi, facies senum non fuerunt in honore (non fuerunt honoratae, <i>ad verbum</i>)

The beginning of the verse may be explained in two ways. All render thus, “The princes have been slain by their hand,” that is, of their enemies. But I wonder how it never occurred to them, that it was far more grievous, that they were slain by their own hand. I certainly do not doubt but that the Prophet says here, that some of the princes had laid violent hands on themselves. For it would be a frigid expression, that the princes were hung by the hand of enemies; but if we read, that the princes were hung by their own hand, this would be far more atrocious, as we have before seen that even women, excelling in humanity, devoured their own offspring. So he says now that princes were hung, not by enemies, for it was a common thing for the conquered to be slain by their enemies, and be also hung by way of reproach; but the Prophet, as it appears to me, meant to express something more atrocious, even that the miserable princes were constrained to lay violent hands on themselves. ^{F111}

He adds, that *the faces of the aged were not honored*; which is also a thing not natural; for we know that some honor is always rendered to old age, and that time of life is commonly regarded with reverence. When, therefore, no respect is shown to the aged, the greatest barbarity must necessarily prevail. It is the same, then, as though the Prophet had said that the people had been so disgracefully treated, that their enemies had not even spared the aged. We also now understand why he adds this, for it would have otherwise appeared incredible, that the princes hung themselves by their own hand. But he here intimates that there was no escape for them, except they in despair sought death for themselves, because all humanity had disappeared. It follows, —

<250513> **Lamentations 5:13**

13. They took the young men to grind, and the children fell under the wood.

13. Adolescentes ad molam sumpserunt, et pueri in ligno ceciderunt (*vel*, impegerunt)

I cannot proceed farther now.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast once stretched forth thy hand to consecrate us a people to thyself, — O grant, that thy paternal favor may perpetually shine on us, and that we may, on the other hand, strive always to glorify thy name, so that having once embraced us thou mayest continue thy goodness, until we shall at length enjoy the fullness of all blessings in thy celestial kingdom, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. — Amen.

LECTURE EIGHTEENTH

The Prophet now says, that *young men, had been delivered to the mill*, or to the grinding-house; and we know that of all servile works this was the lowest; for as they used asses to grind, so also they used slaves. The meaning is, that the Jews were shamefully treated, and were reduced to the most abject condition. I know not how came Jerome to give this version, that they were basely used for lust; for תחנ, *thechen*, means to grind or to tear. He thought that it means here something base, which could not be named, as though the enemies had shamefully abused the young men; but we may gather from the second clause of the verse that such an idea does not accord with the passage.

He then says, that *young men* were compelled to *grind*, and that *boys stumbled under the wood*. He means that boys were loaded with wood, as drudges were wont to be; and it was a vile work. As, then, he said previously, that the young men were employed in grinding, so now he says that boys succumbed under the wood, because they carried burdens on their shoulders too heavy for them, which they were not able to bear. We now, then, apprehend what the Prophet means. It follows, —

<250514> Lamentations 5:14	
14. The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their music	14. Senes cessarunt e porta adolescentes a pulsatione sua (<i>vel</i> , canticis musicis.)

Here the Prophet briefly shews that the city was reduced to ruins, so that nothing but desolation could be seen there. For when cities are inhabited, judges sit at the gate and young men exercise themselves in lawful pursuits; but he says that there were no judgments; for at that time, as it is well known, they were wont to administer justice and to hold assemblies at the gates of cities. It was then the same as though all civil order had been abolished.

Then he adds, the *young men had ceased from their own beating* or musical songs. The meaning is, that there was so great a desolation in the city, that, it was no more a city. For men cannot dwell together without laws and

without courts of justice. Where courts of justice are closed up, where laws are mute, where no equity is administered, there barbarity prevails, which is worse than solitude; and where there are no assemblies for legitimate amusements, life becomes brutal, for we know that man is a sociable being. By these words, then, the Prophet shews that a dreadful desolation appeared in the city after the people had gone into exile. And among the Chaldeans, and in Assyria, they had not their own judges nor any form of government, for they were dispersed and scattered, and that designedly, that they might not unite together any more; for it was the purpose of the Chaldeans to obliterate by degrees the very name of the people; and hence they were not there formed into a community. So justly does the Prophet deplore their desolation even in exile. It follows, —

<250515> Lamentations 5:15	
15. The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning.	15. Cessavit gaudium cordis nostri, versus est luctum chorus noster (sic enim vertunt לאבל מחלנו

He pursues the same subject, but he seems more clearly to explain what he had briefly stated in the preceding verse, when he says that *all joy of the heart had ceased, and that all the dances were turned into mourning.*^{F112} We know that life is more bitter than death when men are in constant mourning; and truly where there is no hilarity, that state of life is worse than death. And this is what the Prophet now means by saying that all joy had ceased, and that all dances were converted into mourning.

<250516> Lamentations 5:16	
16. The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!	16. Cecidit corona capitis nostri; vae nunc nobis, quia peccavimus.

By the crown of the head he no doubt understands all those ornaments by which that people had been adorned. They had a kingdom and a priesthood, which were like two luminaries or two precious jewels; they had also other things by which the Lord had adorned them. As, then, they were endued with such excellent things, they are said to have borne a

crown on their head. But a crown was not only taken for a diadem, — it was also a symbol of joy and of honor; for not only kings then wore crowns, but men were crowned at weddings and feasts, at games also, and theatres. The Prophet, in a word, complains, that though many ornaments did belong to the people, yet now they were denuded of them all: *The crown*, he says, *has fallen from our head.*^{F113}

He then exclaims, *Woe to us now, for we have sinned!* Here he sets forth an extreme misery, and at the same time shews that all hope of restoration was taken away. He, however, mentions the cause, *because they had done wickedly.* By saying this he did not intend to exasperate their sorrow, so that they who were thus afflicted might murmur against God; but, on the contrary, his object was to humble the afflicted, so that they might perceive that they were justly punished. It is the same as though he had summoned them as guilty before the tribunal of God, and pronounced in one word that they justly suffered or sustained so grievous a punishment; for a just God is an avenger of wickedness.

We hence conclude, that when he said yesterday that the fathers who had sinned were dead, and their iniquity was borne by their children, he did not so speak as to exempt the living from all blame; for here he condemns them and includes himself in the number. But I explained yesterday the meaning of that verse; and here the Prophet ingenuously confesses that the people were justly punished, because they had by their sins provoked the wrath of God. And this doctrine ought to be carefully observed; because when we are pressed down by adversities, Satan will excite us to sorrow, and at the same time hurry us on to rage, except this doctrine comes to our minds, that we have to do with God, who is a righteous Judge. For the knowledge of our sins will tame our pride and also check all those clamorous complaints, which the unbelieving are wont to utter when they rise up against God. Our evils, then, ought to lead us to consider God's judgment and to confess our sins; and this was the end which our Prophet had in view. It follows, —

<250517> Lamentations 5:17

17. For this our heart is faint; for those things our eyes are dim.

17. Propterea debile est cor nostrum; super hoc (*id est*, propter hanc causam) obtenebrati sunt oculi nostri.

He connects sorrow here with the acknowledgment of sin, that the people under the pressure and agony of sorrow might apply their minds so as to consider their own sins. At the same time the Prophet, no doubt, includes here all that we have already observed, as though he had said that the people were not without reason wearied with sorrow, for they had ample and manifold reasons for their grief.

For this reason, he says, that is, we do not exceed a due measure in our sorrow, for our afflictions are not ordinary, so that our grief cannot be moderate; but as we are come to an extremity, it cannot then be but our minds should be overwhelmed with sorrow. As, then, the curse of God appeared everywhere, he says that this was the cause of the fainting heart; and he says also, Therefore were our eyes darkened. This is a common metaphor, that the eyes become dim through sorrow; for the senses through sorrow are blunted. Hence it is that the sight of the eyes is injured; and David especially makes use of this mode of speaking. Our Prophet then says that the eyes were darkened, because their grief was, as it were, deadly. It follows —

<250518> Lamentations 5:18

18. Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it.

18. Propter montem Sion qui in vastitatem redactus est, vulpes incedunt in eo.

Though he had in general included all kinds of evils, he yet mentions now the principal cause of sorrow, that *mount* Sion had lost its beauty and its excellency. For that place had been chosen by God, as though he had descended there from heaven, that he might dwell there; and we know also that its beauty is spoken of in high terms. For there the face of God shone forth, as Moses and the Prophets often speak. It was then an extremely sad change, that as God had dwelt in mount Sion, foxes should lodge there

as in a deserted cave. For on mount Sion was the tabernacle or the sanctuary; and God says that it was the tabernacle of meeting, מועד, *moud*, because there he wished to hold intercourse with his people. As, then, that place included God and his Church, it was, as I have said, a dreadful and monstrous thing, that it had become so desolate, that foxes succeeded in the place of God and the faithful. It was not, then, without reason that Jeremiah, after having spoken of so many and so bitter calamities, mentioned this as the chief, that *mount Sion was reduced to desolation, so that foxes ran there hither and thither.* ^{F114}

For as it is the principal thing, and as it were the chief of all blessings, to be counted God's people, and to have a familiar access to him, so in adversities nothing is so sad as to be deprived of God's presence. When David testified. his gratitude to God, because he had been enriched by every kind of blessing, he added this,

“I shall dwell in the house of God.” (<192306> Psalm 23:6.)

For though he had spoken of wealth and riches and of the abundance of all things, yet he saw that his chief happiness was to call on God together with the faithful, and to be deemed one of his people. So, also, on the other hand, the Prophet here shews that nothing can be sadder to the godly than when God leaves his dwelling and makes it desolate, in order to terrify all who may see it.

This had been predicted to them by Jeremiah himself, as we have seen in the seventh chapter of his prophecies, “Go ye to Shiloh,” he said, where the ark of the covenant had long been; though that place had been a long time the habitation of God, yet it was afterwards rejected with great disdain. Jeremiah then declared to the Jews, while they were yet in safety, that such would be the condition of Jerusalem; but his prophecy was not believed. He now, then, confirms, by the event, what he had predicted by God's command, when he says that mount Sion was become the den of foxes. It follows, —

<250519> **Lamentations 5:19**

19. Thou, O Lord, remained for ever; thy throne from generation to generation.

19. Tu Jehova perpetuo sedebis, solium tuum in aetatem et aetatem (id est, omnibus seculis.)

The Prophet here raises up his eyes to God, and, by his example, he encourages all the godly, that they might not cease, notwithstanding their extreme calamities, to look to God, as we find in the hundred and second Psalm, where the Psalmist speaks of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. Indeed the subject of that psalm is similar to that of this chapter; nor is there a doubt but that it was composed when the people, as it clearly appears, were in exile in Babylon. There the Psalmist, after having spoken of the ruin of the city, and calamities of the people, says, that the heavens were growing old and wasting as it were with rottenness, together with the whole world; but he afterwards adds,

“But thou, O Lord, remainest perpetually.”
(<19A227> Psalm 102:27-29.)

At the same time he speaks more clearly than Jeremiah, for he applies his doctrine to the consolation of the Church, “Children’s children,” he says, “shall inhabit it.” Hence, from the perpetuity and immutability of God, he infers the perpetuity of the Church. This is not done by Jeremiah, though it is implied; and for this reason, no doubt, he exclaims, that *God dwells for ever*, and that *his throne remains fixed in all ages*, or through all ages.

For when we fix our eyes on present things, we must necessarily vacillate, as there is nothing permanent in the world; and when adversities bring a cloud over our eyes, then faith in a manner vanishes, at least we are troubled and stand amazed. Now the remedy is, to raise up our eyes to God, for however confounded things may be in the world, yet he remains always the same. His truth may indeed be hidden from us, yet it remains in him. In short, were the world to change and perish a hundred times, nothing could ever affect the immutability of God. There is, then, no doubt but that the Prophet wished to take courage and to raise himself up to a firm hope, when he exclaimed, “Thou, O God, remainest for ever.” By the word sitting or remaining, he doubtless meant that the world is governed by God. We know that God has no body, but the word sitting is to be

taken metaphorically, for He is no God except he be the judge of the world.

This, also, he expresses more clearly, when he says, that God’s throne remains through all ages. The throne of God designates the government of the world. But if God be the judge of the world, then he doeth nothing,, or suffereth nothing to be done, but according to his supreme wisdom and justice.^{F115} We hence see, that inasmuch as the state of present things, as thick darkness, took away all distinction, the Prophet raises up his eyes to God and acknowledges him as remaining the same perpetually, though things in the world continually change. Then the throne of God is set in opposition to chance or uncertain changes which ungodly men dream of; for when they see things in great confusion in the world, they say that it is the wheel of fortune, they say that all things happen through blind fate. Then the Prophet, that he might not be cast down with the unbelieving, refers to the throne of God, and strengthens himself in this doctrine of true religion, — that God nevertheless sits on this throne, though things are thus confounded, though all things fluctuate; yea, even though storms and tempests mingle as it were heaven and earth together, yet God sits on his throne amidst all such disturbances. However turbulent, then, all the elements may be, this derogates nothing from the righteous and perpetual judgment of God. This is the meaning of the words; and hence fruit and benefit may be easily gathered. It. follows, —

<250520> Lamentations 5:20	
20. Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long time?	20. Ut quid in perpetuum oblivisceris nostri, deseres nos in protractionem (<i>vel</i> , longitudinem) dierum?

He seems, indeed, here to expostulate with God; but the faithful, even when they patiently bear their evils, and submit to God’s scourges, do yet familiarly deposit their complaints in his bosom, and thus unburden themselves. We see that David prayed, and no doubt by the real impulse of the Spirit, and at the same time expostulated,

“Why dost thou forget me perpetually?” (<191301> Psalm 13:1.)

Nor is there a doubt but that the Prophet. took this complaint from David. Let us, then, know, that though the faithful sometimes take this liberty of expostulating with God, they yet do not put off reverence, modesty, submission, or humility. For when the Prophet thus inquired why God should for ever forget his people and forsake them, he no doubt relied on his own prophecies, which he knew had proceeded from God, and thus he deferred his hope until the end of the seventy years, for that time had been prefixed by God. But it was according to human judgment that he complained in his own person, and in that of the faithful, that the affliction was long; nor is there a doubt but that he dictated this form of prayer to the faithful, that k might be retained after his death. He, then, formed this prayer, not only according to his own feeling, and for the direction to those of his own age; but his purpose was to supply the faithful with a prayer after his own death, so that they might flee to the mercy of God.

We now, then, perceive how complaints of this kind ought to be understood, when the prophets asked, “How long.?” as though they stimulated God to hasten the time; for it cannot be, when we are pressed down by many evils, but that we wish help to be accelerated; for faith does not wholly strip us of all cares and anxieties. But when we thus pray, let us remember that our times are at the will and in the hand of God, and that we ought not to hasten too much. It is, then, lawful for us on the one hand to ask God to hasten; but, on the other hand, we ought to check our impatience and wait until the suitable time comes. Both these things the Prophet no doubt joined together when he said, *Why shouldest thou, perpetually forget us and forsake us?*^{F116}

We yet see that he judged according to the evils then endured; and doubtless he believed that God had not forsaken his own people nor forgotten them, as no oblivion can happen to him. But, as I have already said, the Prophet mentioned these complaints through human infirmity, not that men might indulge themselves in their own thoughts, but that they might ascend by degrees to God and overcome all these temptations. It follows, —

<250521> Lamentations 5:21

21. Turn thou us unto tee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.

21. Convertite nos, Jehova ad te et convertimur: innova (*vel*, instaure) dies nostros sicuti olim (*vel*, ab initio.)

The Prophet shews, in this verse, that the remedy is in God's hand whenever he is pleased to succor his people. He, then, exalts here the power of God, as though he had said, that God is not without power, but that he can, whenever he pleases, help his people. This is not, indeed, a sufficient ground for confidence, yet it is the beginning of hope; for whence is it that despair weakens us, so that we cannot call on God? because we think that it is all over with us; and whence is this? because we impiously confine the power of God; nay, we in a manner, through our unbelief, repel his power, which would otherwise be exerted in our behalf. As, then, we thus close the door against God, when we extenuate his power, and think that our evils will prevail; it is, therefore, as I have said, the beginning of hope to believe that all the issues of death are in God's hand, and that were we a hundred times swallowed up, yet he, by stretching forth his hand to us, can become the author of salvation to us at any moment.

This is now the argument which the Prophet handles, when he says, Turn us, O Jehovah, and we shall be turned; that is, "If thou, O Jehovah, be pleased to gather us, salvation is already certain to us." And he does not speak here of repentance. There is, indeed, a twofold turning or conversion of men to God, and a twofold turning of God to men. There is all inward turning when God regenerates us by his own Spirit; and turning with respect to us is said to be the feeling of true religion, when, after having been alienated from him, we return to the right way and to a fight mind. There is also all exterior turning as to God, that is, when he so receives men into favor, that his paternal favor becomes apparent; but the interior turning of men to God takes place when they recover life and joy.

Of this second turning, then, does the Prophet now speak, Turn us, O Jehovah, and we shall be turned; that is, If thou, Jehovah, lookest on us, our condition will immediately become prosperous, for in thy hand there is a sure salvation for us." As, then, the Jews were at that time like the dead,

the Prophet says, that if it pleased God to gather them, they could in a moment, as they say, have been restored, as it is said also in the Psalms,

“Thou takest away life, and all things change; send forth thy Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.” (<19A429>Psalm 104:29, 30.)

As, then, God renews the face of the earth and restores it by only looking at it, hence now the Prophet says, that the Jews, though they had been destroyed, could yet be immediately restored, if it were the will of God to receive them into favor. ^{F117}

He adds, Renew our days as of old. This is an explanation of the former clause — the renewing of days was restoration to their former state. God had been for many ages the deliverer of his people; under David had been their greatest happiness; under Solomon also they had greatly flourished; but from the time when God had redeemed his people, he had given, as we know, many and constant proofs of his favor and mercy. As, then, God’s goodness had, by so many evidences been made conspicuous, the Prophet now says, *Renew our days as formerly*, that is, “Restore us to that happiness, which was formerly a testimony of thy paternal favor towards thy people.” We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet.

But it ought to be noticed, that he grounds his hope on the ancient benefits of God; for as God had formerly redeemed his people, had often helped the miserable, had poured forth on them, posterity fullness of blessings, hence the Prophet encourages himself to entertain good hope, and suggests also to others the same ground of confidence. We see that this was done often by David; for whenever he mentions ancient testimonies of God’s favor towards his people, he hence gathered, that God would extend the same goodness and kindness to posterity. It follows, —

<250522> Lamentations 5:22	
22. But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us.	22. Nisi (<i>vel</i> , sed, <i>vel</i> , quod si) rejiciendo rejecisti nos excanduisti contra nos valde.

The two words כִּי אִם, *ki am*, are differently explained: some render them, “but if,” or “certainly if,” and thus separate the verse into two parts, “Surely if thou hast rejected us, thou art very angry;” but this is a forced

meaning, not intended, as I think, by the Prophet. And these seem to have been compelled by necessity to pervert the Prophet's words; because it appears hard simply to declare that the people had been wholly rejected by God. As, then, this harshness offended them, they contrived this comment, "If thou hast rejected us, thou art very angry." But as I have said, this exposition I do not approve of, because it is a very forced one; and the greater part of interpreters follow what I stated in the first place, for they take **כִּי אִם**, *ki am*, adversatively. The two particles are often connected together, and rendered, "though" or although, — "Though thou hast rejected us:" and hence the last verse has been repeated.

For the Jews labor under this superstition, that when a book ends with a hard and severe sentence, or one containing a dreadful threatening, grating to the ears, in order to avoid the sad omen, they repeat the last verse but one. So they do at the end of Isaiah, and at the end of Malachi. As Isaiah says, "It shall be a horror (or abomination) to all flesh;" they therefore repeat the previous verse. So in Malachi; as he says, "Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse — **חֶרֶם**, *cherem*," they think that as he pronounces there an anathema, it is a sort of charm that may absorb this curse, to have the previous verse repeated after it. There is, then, no doubt but that they took this passage in the same sense, "Though thou hast rejected us," etc.

If this explanation be approved, we must hold that the Prophet here exceeded due limits, as also the faithful, in their prayers, do not always so restrain themselves, but that some heat bubbles up; for we see how David, in the Psalms, too often shewed this kind of feeling; and it is hence evident, that his mind was not always sufficiently calm. We must then say, that the Prophet was impelled by a turbulent feeling when he uttered these words.

But **כִּי אִם**, *ki am*, may also be rendered, "Unless," or except' and it is singular that no one has perceived this, though it be not an unsuitable meaning, "Except it may be thou rejecting hast rejected us, and hast become very angry with us," or above measure angry; for **עַד מְאֹד**, *od mad* in Hebrew, means the same as above measure (*supra modum*) in Latin. Though the Prophet seems to speak doubtingly, by laying down t, his condition, there is yet no doubt but that he struggled against all unbelief, when he said, *Except it may be*; for he reasons from what is impossible, "Turn thou us to thee and we shall be turned, renew our days

as formerly; *except it may be thou hast rejected us:*” but this was impossible. Then, as I have said, the Prophet here strengthens himself by setting up a shield against all the assaults of temptations when he says, *Except it may be thou hast rejected us.*^{F118}

But it cannot be that God will reject his people, and be so angry with them, as never to be reconciled. We hence see that the Prophet does not simply set down the condition, as though he said, “O God, if thou art to be perpetually angry with us, and wilt never be reconciled, it is there all over with our salvation; but if thou wilt be reconciled to us, we shall then entertain good hope.” No, the Prophet did not thus keep his own mind and the minds of others in suspense, but had a sure confidence as to God’s favor; for it cannot be that God will ever forsake those whom he has chosen, as Paul also shews in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

As it has so seemed good to the brethren, I will begin tomorrow the explanation of Ezekiel.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou didst formerly execute judgments so severe on thy people, — O grant, that these chastisements may at this day teach us to fear thy name, and also keep us in watchfulness and humility, and that we may so strive to pursue the course of our calling, that we may find that thou art always our leader, that thy hand is stretched forth to us, that thy aid is ever ready for us, until, being at length gathered into thy celestial kingdom, we shall enjoy that eternal life, which thine only-begotten Son has obtained for us by his own blood. — Amen.

PRAISE TO GOD.

A TRANSLATION OF

CALVIN'S VERSION OF

THE LAMENTATIONS.

CHAPTER 1

- 1 How sits solitary the city Which abounded in people I How is she become as a widow, Who was great among the nations! She who ruled among provinces Is become tributary!
- 2 Weeping she has wept in the night And her tears are on her cheeks; She has no comforter All along all her lovers; All her friends have dealt falsely with her, They are become her enemies.
- 3 Migrated hath Judah because of oppression, And because of much servitude; She dwelleth among the nations, She finds no rest; All who pursued her have taken her between the straits.
- 4 The ways of Sion mourn, For they come not to the festivals; All her gates are desolate, her priests are sighing; her virgins are afflicted, And she is in bitterness!
- 5 Her adversaries have become the head, Her enemies have prospered; Because Jehovah hath afflicted her For the greatness of her iniquities: Her little ones have gone into exile Before the adversary;
- 6 And departed from the daughter of Sion Has all her glory; her princes have become like harts, Who cannot find pasture; And they have gone without strength Before their pursuer.

- 7** Remember did Jerusalem, In the days of her affliction and want,
All her desirable things, Which were from ancient days; When
fall did her people into the hand of the enemy, And she had no
helper: Seen her have enemies, They laughed at her Sabbath.
- 8** A sin hath Jerusalem sinned, Therefore she is become a
wandered; All who honored her have despised her, Because they
have seen her nakedness; She even groaned, And turned
backward:
- 9** Her shame is in her skirts; She remembered not her end;
Therefore she came down wonderfully, She hath no comforter:
See, Jehovah, my affliction, For magnified himself hath the
enemy.
- 10** His hand did the enemy stretch out To all her desirable things;
For she saw the heathens, When they entered her sanctuary,
Respecting whom thou hast commanded, They shall not come
to thy congregation.
- 11** All her people are sighing, They are seeking bread; They have
given their desirable things For food, to restore life: See,
Jehovah, and look, For I am vile.
- 12** is it nothing to all of you Who pass by the way? Look and see,
if there be a sorrow Like the sorrow that is come to me; For
afflicted me hath Jehovah, In the day of the indignation of his
wrath.
- 13** From on high hath he sent fire into my bones And it hath
prevailed over them: He hath spread his net for my feet, He hath
turned me backward; He hath made me desolate, Sorrowing all
the day.
- 14** Tied is the yoke of mine iniquities by his hand, They are twined
together: They have come up on my neck, He hath weakened
my strength: Given me up hath the Lord, Into the hand of my
enemies, From whom I shall not be able to rise.

- 15** Trodden under foot all my valiant men Hath the Lord in the midst of me: He hath brought on me the fixed time To destroy my young men; The winepress hath the Lord trodden, As to the virgin, the daughter of Judah.
- 16** For this I weep; mine eye mine eye! Waters flow down; For removed far from me is a comforter Who might revive my soul; My children are become desolate, For prevailed has the enemy.
- 17** Expand did Sion her hands, She had no comforter; Given a charge had Jehovah as to Jacob, To his adversaries all around him; Become is Jerusalem An abomination among them.
- 18** Righteous is Jehovah, For his mouth have I provoked, Hear, I pray, all ye people, And behold my sorrow: My virgins and my young men, They are gone into captivity.
- 19** I called to my friends, They deceived me; My priests and my elders, In the city they expired, While they were seeking food for themselves, To revive their soul.
- 20** See, Jehovah, for I am distressed, My bowels are troubled; Overwhelmed is my heart within me, For rebelling I have rebelled: Without bereaves the sword, Within it is as death,
- 21** They have heard that I mourn, That I have no comforter; All mine enemies have heard of my evil; They rejoice that thou hast done it, And brought the day thou hast announced: But they shall be as I am.
- 22** Let all their wickedness Come into thy presence; And do to them as thou hast done To me for all my sins; For my sighings are many, And my heart is weak.

CHAPTER 2

- 1** How hath the Lord clouded in his wrath The daughter of Sion! He hath cast down from heaven to the earth The glory of Israel; And hath not remembered his footstool In the day of his wrath!

- 2 Destroyed hath the Lord, and spared not, All the habitations of Jacob; He hath demolished in his indignation The fortresses of the daughter of Judah; He hath cast them to the ground, he hath profaned Her kingdom and her princes.
- 3 He hath broken in the indignation of his wrath Every horn of Israel; He hath withdrawn his right hand From before the enemy; And he burned like fire in Jacob, The flame devoured all around.
- 4 Bent hath he his bow as an enemy, Stand did his right hand as an adversary, And he slew all the delights of the eye In the tabernacle of the daughter of Sion He hath poured forth As fire, his wrath.
- 5 The Lord hath been like an enemy, He hath destroyed Israel; He hath destroyed all his palaces, He hath demolished his fortresses; He hath increased in the daughter of Judah Mourning and lamentation:
- 6 And he hath removed as a garden His tabernacle; He hath destroyed his testimony; Forgotten hath Jehovah in Sion The assembly and the Sabbath; He hath rejected, in the indignation of his wrath, The king and the priest:
- 7 Abhorred hath Jehovah his altar, He hath cast off his sanctuary; Given up hath he into the hand of the enemy The walls of her palaces: A noise they made in the house of Jehovah, As on the day of the assembly.
- 8 Resolve did Jehovah to destroy the wall Of the daughter of Sion; He extended a line, He drew not back his hand from scattering; Therefore mourned hath the rampart and the wall, They have fallen together.
- 9 Sunk have her gates in the ground; He hath destroyed and broken her bars; Her king and her princes, They are among the heathens; There is no law, her prophets, They find no vision from Jehovah:

- 10** They sit on the ground, they are silent, The elders of the daughter of Sion; They cast dust on their head, They gird themselves with sackcloth; Bend to the ground their head Do the virgins of Jerusalem.
- 11** Consume with tears did mine eyes, Troubled were my bowels; Poured forth on the ground was my liver, For the breach of the daughter of my people; When the child and the suckling Vanished away in the streets of the city.
- 12** To their mothers they say, - "Where is corn and wine " While they vanish away, as a dying man, In the streets of the city, And while they pour out their souls Into the bosom of their mothers
- 13** What can I testify to thee? What can I compare to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? What can I liken to thee, to comfort thee, O virgin, the daughter of Sion? For great as the sea is thy breach, Who can heal thee?
- 14** Thy prophets have seen for thee Vanity and insipidity. And they disclosed not thine iniquity, That they might reverse thy captivity; And they saw for thee Prophecies of vanity and expulsions.
- 15** They clapped at thee their hands, All who passed by on the road; They hissed and moved their head At the daughter of Jerusalem, — "Is this the city of which they said, Perfect in beauty, the joy of all the earth?
- 16** Opened at thee their mouth Have all thine enemies; They hissed and gnashed the teeth, They said, "We shall devour her, Surely the day which we expected We have found, we have seen."
- 17** Jehovah hath done what he had purposed; He hath fulfilled his word, Which he had commanded from days of old; He hath overthrown and not spared; And he hath made to rejoice over thee the enemy, He hath raised up the horn of thine adversaries.
- 18** Cry out did their heart to the Lord: O wall of the daughter of Sion, Make tears to flow down As a river, day and night; Give thyself no rest, Let not the pupil of thine eye cease.

- 19** Rise, cry aloud in the night, At the beginning of the watches;
Pour out like waters Thy heart before the Lord; Raise lip to him
thy hands For the life of thy little ones, Who faint through
famine At the head of all the streets.
- 20** See, Jehovah, and look, To whom thou hast done this: Should
women eat their own fruit, Infants while nursed! Should they be
slain in the Lord's sanctuary, The priest and the prophet!
- 21** Lie on the ground in the streets Did boys and old men; My
virgins and my young men, They fell by the sword: Thou hast
killed in the day of thy wrath, Thou hast slaughtered and not
spared.
- 22** Thou hast summoned, as on t festive day, My terrors all
around; And in the day of the indignation of Jehovah!, There
was none surviving or remaining; Whom I nursed and brought
up, The enemy consumed them.

CHAPTER 3

- 1** I am a man who hath seen affliction Through the rod of his
indignation'
- 2** Me hath he led and made to go Into darkness, and not into light.
- 3** Surely against me is he turned, He turns his hand daily.
- 4** To grow old hath he made my flesh and my skin, He hath
broken my bones.
- 5** He hath builded against me, And surrounded me with gall and
trouble.
- 6** In darkness hath he made me to lie As the dead for ever.
- 7** He hath shut me up, that I cannot go forth He hath made heavy
my fetter.
- 8** Even when I cried, and cried aloud, he shut out my prayer.

- 9** He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stones, My paths hath he perverted.
- 10** A bear lying in wait hath he been to me, A lion in his den.
- 11** My ways hath he perverted, and lie hath torn me, He hath made me a waste.
- 12** He hath bent his bow, and made me As a mark for the arrow.
- 13** He hath made to enter into my reins The sons of his quiver.
- 14** I became a derision to all my people, Their song all the day.
- 15** He hath satiated me with bitterness, He hath filled me with gall.
- 16** He hath broken with pebbles my teeth, He hath covered me with dust,
- 17** And far removed from peace is my soul; I have forgotten good.
- 18** And I said, "Perished hath my strength And my hope from Jehovah;"
- 19** When I remember my affliction and my trouble, The poison and the gall:
- 20** Remembering remember does my soul, And it is humbled within me
- 21** This will I recall to my mind, Therefore will I hope.
- 22** The mercies of Jehovah! surely they are not consumed; Surely failed not have his compassion's;
- 23** Renewed are they in the morning; Great is thy faithfulness.
- 24** My portion is Jehovah, said my soul, Therefore will I hope in him.
- 25** Good is Jehovah to him who waits for him, To the soul that seeks him;
- 26** Good it is to hope and to be silent, As to the salvation of Jehovah;

- 27 Good it is for a man To bear the yoke in his youth:
- 28 He will sit apart, and be silent, For he will raise it on himself;
- 29 He will put in the dust his mouth, If so be that there is hope;
- 30 He will give to the smiter his cheek, He will be filled with reproaches.
- 31 For not cast away for ever Will the Lord;
- 32 For though he causes grief, he will yet show compassion,
According to the multitude of his mercies;
- 33 :For he does not from his heart afflict, Nor cause grief to the children of men.
- 34 When one tears under his feet All the bound of the earth, —
- 35 When he perverts man's judgment Before the face of the Most High, —
- 36 When he turns a man aside in his causes — The Lord does not regard.
- 37 Who is this that says, "It was, And God has not commanded .t"
- 38 From the mouth of the Most High Can not good and evil proceed?
- 39 Why should he weary himself, a living man, And a man in his sins?
- 40 Let us examine our ways, and search, And turn to Jehovah;
- 41 Let us lift up our hearts with our hands To God in the heavens.
- 42 We have sinned, and have been rebellious, Thou hast not spared;
- 43 Thou hast covered us over in wrath, and pursued us, Thou hast slain and not spared.
- 44 Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, So that prayer cannot pass through.

- 45** An offscouring and a refuse hast thou made us In the midst of
the nations;
- 46** Opened at us their mouth Have all our enemies;
- 47** Fear and the pit have come to us, Desolation and a breach.
- 48** Rivers of waters mine eye brings down, For the breach of the
daughter of my people.
- 49** Mine eye flows down and rests not; There will be no
intermissions,
- 50** Until Jehovah looks down, And beholds from heaven.
- 51** Mine eye grieves my soul, Because of all the daughters of my
city.
- 52** Hunting they have hunted me as a sparrow, Who are mine
enemies without cause;
- 53** They have made fast in a pit my life, And cast a stone over me;
- 54** Flowed have waters over my head; I said, I am cut off.
- 55** I called on thy name, Jehovah, From the deepest pit:
- 56** My voice hast thou heard; close not thine ear To my groaning,
to my cry.
- 57** Thou didst draw nigh in the day I cried to thee, Thou didst say,
“Fear not :”
- 58** Thou hast, O Lord, pleaded the cause of my soul, Thou hast
redeemed my life.
- 59** Thou hast seen, e Jehovah, my oppression; Defend my cause.
- 60** Thou hast seen all their vengeance’s, All their counsels against
me.
- 61** Thou hast heard, O Jehovah, their reproaches, All their counsels
against me,-
- 62** The speeches of those who rose against me, And their words
against me daily.

- 63** Look on their sitting down and their rising up; I am their song.
- 64** Render to them their reward, O Jehovah, According to the work of their hands.
- 65** Give them blindness of heart; Thy curse be on them.
- 66** Pursue them in wrath, and destroy them From under the heavens of Jehovah.

CHAPTER 4

- 1** How obscured is the gold! How changed is the fine gold! Cast forth have been the stones of the sanctuary At the head of all the streets
- 2** The precious sons of Sion, Clothed in gold, How they are counted as earthen pitchers, The work of the potter's hands!
- 3** Even serpents draw out the breast, They suckle their young ones: The daughter of my people was cruel, Like the ostriches in the desert.
- 4** Cleave did the tongue of the suckling To the roof of his mouth for thirst; The little ones asked bread, No one divided to them.
- 5** They who fed on delicacies Perished in the streets; They who had been brought up in scarlet Embraced the dunghills:
- 6** And the punishment of the daughter of my people Has been greater than the punishment of Sodom, Which was overthrown as in a moment, And no strokes remained on her.
- 7** Purer were her Nazarites than snow, Whiter than milk; They were ruddy in their body, Above precious stones; Sapphire was their polish:
- 8** Darker than darkness became their form, They were not known in the streets; Cleave did their skin to their bones, It became dry as wood.

- 9** Better were the slain with the sword Than the slain with famine:
They pined away, having been pierced through By the knits of
the field.
- 10** The hands of compassionate mothers Boiled their own
offspring; They became food for them, At the destruction of the
daughter of my people.
- 11** Fulfilled has Jehovah his wrath; He poured forth the indignation
of his wrath; And he kindled a fire in Sion, Which devoured her
foundations.
- 12** They could not have believed, the kings of the earth, Nor all the
inhabitants of the world, That enter would the adversary and the
enemy Into the gates of Jerusalem.
- 13** For the sin of her prophets, The iniquities of her priests, Who
shed in the midst of her The blood of the righteous, —
- 14** They wandered blind in the streets, They were polluted with
blood; Because they could not But touch their garments.
- 15** Depart ye, “Unclean,” they cried to them, Depart, depart, come
not near: Because they fled, and also wandered, They said
among the Gentiles, “They shall not return to dwell;
- 16** The face of Jehovah hath divided them, He will no more regard
them.” The face of the priests they respected not, And to the
elders they shewed no mercy.
- 17** While we were yet standing, our eyes failed, As to our vain
help; In our looking out we looked out To a nation that could
not save us.
- 18** They hunted our steps, So that we could not walk in our streets;
Draw near did our end, fulfilled were our days, Surely come did
our end.
- 19** Swifter were our pursuers Than the eagles of heaven; On the
mountains they followed us, They lay in wait for us in the
desert.

- 20** The spirit of our nostrils, the anointer of Jehovah, Was taken in their snares; Of whom we said, “Under his shadow We shall live among the nations.”
- 21** Rejoice and be glad, thou daughter of Edom, Who dwellest in the land of Uz. To thee also shall the cup pass over, Thou shalt be inebriated and made naked.
- 22** Completed is thy punishment, O daughter of Sion, He will no more deliver thee into exile; He will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom, And will uncover thy sin.

CHAPTER 5

- 1** Remember, O Jehovah, what has come to us; Look, and see our reproach:
- 2** Our heritage is turned over to foreigners, Our houses to aliens.
- 3** Orphans are we become, without a father; Our mothers are as widows.
- 4** Our own water, for money we drink; Our own wood, for a price it comes to us.
- 5** On our necks have we suffered persecution; We have labored, and had no rest.
- 6** To the Egyptians we extended the hand, To the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.
- 7** Our fathers sinned, and are not; And we their iniquities have borne.
- 8** Servants have ruled over us; None delivered from their hands.
- 9** With our life have we procured our bread, Because of the drought of the desert.
- 10** Our skins are like an oven black, Because of the burnings of famine.

- 11** Women in Sion have been ravished, Virgins in the cities of Judah.
- 12** Princes by their own hand were hung, The faces of elders were not honored.
- 13** Young men they took to grind, And boys under the wood fell.
- 14** Elders ceased from the gate, Young men from their music.
- 15** Ceased has the joy of our heart, Turned into mourning has our dance.
- 16** Fallen has the crown of our head; Woe now to us, for we have sinned!
- 17** Therefore faint is our heart; For this darkener! are our eyes,
- 18** Even for mount Sion, which is desolate; Foxes pass through it.
- 19** Thou Jehovah for ever sittest, Thy throne is through all ages.
- 20** Why shouldest thou perpetually forget us, And forsake us for ever.
- 21** Turn us, Jehovah, to thee, and we shall be turned; Renew our days as of old;
- 22** Except thou hast wholly rejected us, And hast become very angry with us.

PRAISE BE GOD

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 1

FT1 The word is not repeated in the early Versions, nor by *Blayney* and *Henderson*. The word **אֵיכָה**, means properly, “Whence thus?” and it may be rendered, “How is this?” and the passage would be more emphatic, —

1. How is this? alone sits the city, that was full of people!

Like a widow is she that was great among nations!

A princess among provinces is under tribute!

2. Weeping she weeps in the night, and her tear on her cheek!

None to her a comforter of all her lovers!

All her friends have deceived her, they are become her enemies!

These were the various things which created astonishment in the Prophet. — *Ed.*

FT2 *Blayney* and *Horsley* agree in this view; but *Gataker*, *Henry*, and *Henderson* take the previous view, that is, that Judah went to exile on account of the oppression they practiced, and the multiplied servitude they exacted, especially the servitude or slavery to which servants were subjected, as recorded in Jeremiah 34. What confirms this view is the word “Judah,” which, as it implies the greater part, could not be applied to the comparatively few who voluntarily migrated.

3. Removed is Judah for oppression and for much servitude;

She dwells among nations without finding rest;

All her pursuers seized her in the straits.

The *Targum* paraphrases “oppression” by mentioning orphans and widows, and “servitude,” by referring to what servants were subjected to, as related in Jeremiah 34. These were sins for which the Jews had often been threatened with banishment. “Pursuers” rather than “persecutors;” and to be “seized in (or, between) the straits,” is, as Lowth says, a metaphor taken from hunters, who drive the game to narrow places, from which there is no escape.

Houbiqant proposes to connect “oppression and servitude” with the following words, and not with the preceding, —
Removed is Judah; for oppression and for much servitude,
She dwells among the nations without finding rest. — *Ed.*

FT3 Participles are used throughout this verse, which express the present state of things, —

The ways of Sion are mourning, for none are coming to the feasts;
All her gates are made desolate, her priests are sighing;
Her virgins are afflicted, and she, bitterness is to her. — *Ed.*

FT4

5. Become have her oppressors the head,
Her enemies have prospered;
For Jehovah has afflicted her
For the number of her transgressions;
Her children are gone into captivity
Before the face of the oppressor.

The word צַר is not an “adversary,” but an oppressor, one who straitens and oppresses another. — *Ed.*

FT5 The idea here is somewhat different: the princes are compared to harts reduced and enfeebled by famine, so that they were driven by their enemies like a herd of tame cattle. — *Ed.*

FT6 The versions and the *Targ.* are evidently wrong here, and are not consistent with one another. There is no meaning except צ be considered as understood before יָמִים, “days.” The only difference among critics is about the meaning of מַרְוֹד. There is no different reading. It is rendered “rejections — ἀπωσμών,” by the *Sept.*, “prevarication” by the *Vulg.*, and “punishment” by the *Syr.* Parkhurst and Blayney derive it from יָרַד, to come down, to descend. It means the descending or abasement’s to which Jerusalem had been subjected, and has the same meaning in ^{<250319>}Lamentations 3:19. “In the days of her affliction and of her abasement’s.” — *Ed.*

FT7 There are in this verse four lines, while there are only three in all the rest; but there is no ground for supposing an interpolation, as some have thought; for it is found in every Hebrew copy and in the versions,

and the *Targum*. As to the last word, it is rendered by the *Sept.*, “habitation,” or according to the Alexandrian copy, “emigration;” by the *Vulg.* “sabbaths;” and by the *Syr.* “sorrow.” The word is nowhere found to signify the Sabbath. It is either from שְׁבָה, to lead captive, as *Parkhurst* thinks, and means captivity, emigration; or from שָׁבַת, to cease, to come to an end, according to *Blayney* and *Henderson*, and may be rendered “discontinuance,” *i.e.*, as a nation or a state, or “ruin.” But the former meaning agreeing with the *Sept.* is to be preferred, —
 When fall did her people, and she had no helper,
 See her did oppressors, they laughed at her captivity. — *Ed.*

FT8

*“Venit summa dies et ineluctabile tempus
 Dardaniae: fuimus Troes; fuit Ilium et ingens
 Gloria Teucrorum: ferus omnia Jupiter Argos
 Transtulit: incensa Danai dominantur in urbe.”
 Virg. AEn. 2.*

FT9

*“O patria! O divum domus Ilium! Et inclyta bello
 Moenia Dardanidum! Ferus omnia Jupiter Argos
 Transtulit.” —
 AEn 2.*

FT10

*“Postquam res Asiae, Priamique everterterre gentem
 Immeritam visum Superis.” —
 Virg. AEn. 3.*

FT11 “Fluctuation,” by the *Sept.*; “instable,” by the *Vulg.*: “vagrant,” or wandering, by the *Targ.*; and “horror”, by the *Syr.* The verb means to remove; and the reference here is evidently to banishment, and not to uncleanness, as some take it, because the noun is sometimes so taken, persons being removed from society on account of uncleanness. — *Ed.*

FT12 “To turn back” or backward, is a phrase which some regard as expressive of shame, as those who feel shame recede from the public view and hide themselves. — *Ed.*

FT13 “She carries the marks of her sins in the greatness of her punishment,” is Lowth’s remark, which seems to favor this view. — *Ed.*

FT14 The verse may be thus rendered, —

His hand has the oppressor expanded over all her desirable things;
Indeed she saw it: nations entered her sanctuary;
Though thou hast commanded this, “They shall not come to thine
assembly.”

“The desirable things” were sacred things, and might be so rendered.
To expand the hand over them was to seize them, to take possession
of them. — *Ed.*

FT15 That is, she was treated as vile or worthless: “dishonored” is the *Sept.*
— *Ed.*

FT16 It is evidently taken as לו by the *Sept.*, the *Vulg.*, and the *Targ.*; but
as a negative by the *Syr.*, and the sentence is taken as a question: and
this gives the best meaning. — *Ed.*

FT17 All the versions agree in rendering נשקד in the sense of watching; and
when they agree, there is a strong presumption that they are right. And
all agree as to על being a preposition, and not a noun, “yoke,” except
the *Vulg.*, which hardly gives any meaning. The Rabbins have invented
a new meaning for the verb, which it has in no other place, and some
have followed them. It is rendered impersonally by the *Sept.*, “there
has been watching,” but by the *Vulg.*, “he hath watched.” To “watch
over transgressions,” is similar to “watch upon (or over) the evil,” in
<270914> Daniel 9:14; it is to watch over them in order to punish them.
The whole verse I render thus, —

14. He hath watched over my transgressions, by his hand they are
twined; His yoke is upon my neck, he hath made to fail my
strength; Yea, given me hath the Lord into the hands of *the*
oppressor, I cannot stand.


The word “hands” is in a construct form, which shews that there is a
word left out. “I cannot stand,” *i.e.*, against the oppressor; I cannot
resist. The future is used in the sense of the present; literally it is, “I
shall not be able to stand,” or resist. So it is exactly in Welsh; it is the
future, but understood as expressing what is present.


In the first line, “his hand” is connected in all the versions with “twined,” or wreathed together. — *Ed.*

FT18 If the word be rendered “assembly,” or congregation, the meaning is, the assembly of the Chaldeans, and an allusion, as *Gataker* says, is made to the calling of the people to their feasts. It is rendered “time” by the *Sept.* and the *Vulg.*, but “assembly” by the *Syr.* To call against or upon one a fixed time, is no suitable expression. Our version is no doubt right; and with it agree *Blayney* and *Henderson*. — *Ed.*




FT19 The words are as follows, —

The winepress has the Lord trodden as to the virgin,
the daughter of Judah.

The  sometimes means “as to,” or, with respect to. “The daughter of Judah” is in apposition with “virgin.” — *Ed.*

FT20 Though the *Sept.* and *Vulg.* do not repeat the “eye,” yet the *Targ.* has “my two eyes,” and the *Syr.*, “mine eyes.” The repetition is in most copies, and it is very emphatical. See a similar instance in  Jeremiah 4:9.

16. For these things I weep: mine eye! mine eye! it brings down
water; For far from me is a comforter, a restorer of my life;
Become desolate are my sons, for the enemy has prevailed. — *Ed.*

FT21 The same word,  occurs in  Lamentations 1:8, only there is a  in it; and the phrase in its form is similar. The Versions, except the, *Syr.*, and also the *Targ.*, give to it there the idea of wandering, but here of uncleanness. There seems to be no reason for this change; and the end of the next verse favors the idea of wandering: Jerusalem had become a wanderer, or a fugitive, among her oppressors, —

17. Expanded hath Sion her hands, no comforter is to her;
Commanded has Jehovah as to Jacob, *Let* those around him *be* his
oppressors; Become has Jerusalem a wanderer among them.

The word **לָל** is a fugitive, a wanderer, and as Jerusalem is feminine, **לָל** is added, a feminine termination. “Jerusalem” here, as in **<250108>** Lamentations 1:8, means its citizens. — *Ed.*

FT22 “Righteous he, Jehovah.” the pronoun is used instead of the verb *is*, — a common thing in Hebrew. — *Ed.*

FT23 Troubled,” or disquieted, is the rendering of all the versions, and also of the *Targ.* As it is a reduplicate, the verb means greatly troubled or greatly disturbed, or violently agitated. — *Ed.*

FT24 The rendering of the *Sept.* is, —
Abroad the sword has bereaved me, as death at home.

To the same purpose is the *Syr.* and *Arab.* Having before referred to death by famine, he now adds the devastation of the sword. — *Ed.*

FT25 Our version is wrong in rendering this clause in the future tense. The reference is not to the day of vengeance to the Babylonians, but to the day of vengeance which God had brought on his own people. The versions, except the *Syr.*, give the verb in the past tense.

There are here two instances of **וְ** being carried on to the next clause,
—

**21. Heard have they that I sigh, *that* I have no comforter:
All mine enemies have heard of my evil; they have rejoiced
That thou hast done it, that thou hast brought the day thou hast
announced; But they shall be like myself. — *Ed***

CHAPTER 2

FT26 The verb here is in the future tense, and the clause might be thus rendered, —

**Why should the Lord in his wrath becloud
the daughter of Sion?**

And if **שָׁבָה**, in **<250101>** Lamentations 1:1, be in the future tense, as it may be, that clause may be rendered in the same way, —

Why should sit alone the city *that was* full of people?

Then follows here, as in the former instance, a description of what had happened to Sion, —

He hath cast from heaven to earth the glory of Israel,
And not remembered his footstool in the day of his wrath.

At the same time, the clauses may both be rendered as proposed in a note on <250101> Lamentations 1:1, and the tenses of the verbs be preserved. The verb here is clearly in the future tense, and the verb in the former instance may be so; and the future in Hebrew is often to be taken as the present, as the case is in Welsh.

How this! in his wrath becloud does the Lord the daughter of Sion! —
Ed.

FT27 *Gataker, Henry, Blayney, and Henderson*, consider “the right hand” as that of Israel — that God drew back or restrained the right hand of Israel, so that he had no power to face his enemies. But *Scott* agrees with *Calvin*; and favorable to the same view are the early versions, except the *Syr.*, for they render the pronoun, “his own — suam:” the *Targ.* also takes the same view. Had the word been “hand,” it might have been applied to Israel; but it is “the right hand,” which commonly means protection, or rather God’s power, as put forth to defend his people and to resist enemies. This is farther confirmed by what is said in the following verse, that God “stood with his right hand as an adversary.” See <197411> Psalm 74:11 — *Ed.*

FT28 The last clause may be literally rendered thus, —

And he burned in Jacob as fire,
the flame devoured around. — *Ed.*

FT29 The word סֹכֶו is rendered by the versions in the sense of סֹכֶו, “his tabernacle;” but by so doing they make it the same in effect with מוֹעֵד, “his place of meeting,” in the following clause. The verb חָמַס never means what *Calvin* says, to migrate or to remove, but to cast off, or to throw down, that is, with force or violence. Then שָׂר, a fence or enclosure, is what suits the verb, —

6. And he has thrown down as that of a garden his enclosure,
He has destroyed his assembling-place; Forgotten hath Jehovah in
Sion the assembly and the Sabbath; And has cast off, in the
foaming of his wrath, the king and the priest.

The “enclosure,” or fence, refers to the courts which surrounded the Temple; hence the place where the people assembled was destroyed. God had regarded it no more than the fence of a common garden. There is “fence” understood after ג, no uncommon thing in Hebrew. — *Ed.*

FT30 Our version, “cast off,” gives the real meaning of the verb. — *Ed.*

FT31 The verb is often used in this secondary sense, to purpose or resolve or determine, as the result of thinking. The *Vulg.* and the *Targ.* very improperly retain its primary meaning, but the *Syr.* gives that of resolving or determining. — *Ed.*

FT32 It was the line of destruction as mentioned in <233411> Isaiah 34:11, designed to point out what was to be destroyed. — *Ed.*

FT33 The verbs אבל, to mourn, and אסל, to be faint, to fail, when applied to inanimate things, mean to be desolate and to decay. This clause then ought to be thus rendered, —

So that he has made desolate the rampart and the wall,
They are become wholly decayed together.

The connection shows that the where must be rendered, “so that;” and as the last verb has the last letter doubled, the word “wholly” ought to be introduced. — *Ed.*

FT34 “No law.” *Gataker* understood this to refer to the fact, that the law written on the tables of stone, deposited in the temple, was lost, having been destroyed by the Chaldeans. Others say, “no law” was observed respecting God’s worship, the temple having been destroyed. The law, moral, ceremonial and judicial, was given to Israel, and formed the condition on which they were to inherit the land. When banished, because they kept not the law, they had in exile as it were no law; the covenant respecting the land, dependent on the law, was during the exile made void or suspended. — *Ed.*

FT35 The verse may be thus rendered, —

10. They sit on the ground, they are silent, the elders of the daughter of Sion; They have cast dust on their head, they have girded on sackcloth; They have bent to the ground their head, the daughters of Jerusalem. — *Ed.*

FT36 The verbs here are all in the past tense, and the versions so render them. Our version is wrong, as well as that of *Blayney* and *Henderson*, in rendering them in the present tense; for the Prophet is describing how he felt when he witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem, —

11. Consume with tears did my eyes, agitated were my bowels,
Poured out on the ground was my liver, for the breach of the daughter of my people, When faint did the child and the suckling in the streets of the city. — *Ed.*

FT37 That young children and infants are spoken of, is evident from the end of the verse; the one died in the streets, and the other in the mother's bosom. The question, "Where is corn," &c., is to be understood of the children, young boys and girls. — *Ed.*

FT38 To correspond with the former verse, the versions render this, "They said to their mothers." The verb is, indeed, in the future tense, and it might be rendered, "To their mothers would they say;" for the Hebrew future may be thus rendered, —

12. To their mothers would they say," Where is corn and wine?"
When they fainted as one wounded in the streets of the city,
When they poured out their life into the bosom of their mothers.
— *Ed.*

FT39 The simpler rendering would be, "What shall I testify (or declare) to thee?" So the *Sept.* or, "What shall I call thee to witness?" — *Ed.*

FT40 So it means when applied to eatables, but folly or absurdity when applied to words. It comes from נפל, to fall, in the sense of decaying or degenerating. It is what is neither wise nor true. Hence it is rendered "foolishness" by the *Sept.*; "foolish" by the *Vulg.*; and "without substance" by the *Targ.* —

Thy prophets, they have seen vanity and folly.

What they had seen were both “vain,” useless, and “foolish,” absurd.
— *Ed.*

FT41 The verb rendered “turn back,” means also to turn away or aside, and this is the meaning given it here by the *Syr.*, and most suitable to the passage, —

And they discovered not thine iniquity,
to turn aside thy captivity.

That is, as the *Syr.* Expresses it, to avert it. — *Ed.*

FT42 There seems to be a mistake in this word of a 𐤒 for an 𐤓, two letters very similar; for the *Targ.*, the *Syr.*, and the *Arab.*, must have so read the word, as they render it in the sense of what is deceptive, fallacious, or imaginary. It is in the last rendered “phantasms.” The word occurs in ^{<242214>}Jeremiah 22:14, and is applied to chambers through which air or wind passed freely. It may be rendered here winds or airy things. Such was the character of their prophecies. This is far more suitable to the passage than expulsions or rejections, as given by the *Sept.* and *Vulg.* — *Ed.*

FT43 Jeremiah relates what had taken place, the verbs being in the past tense. Our version is not correct in rendering the verbs in the present tense. The old versions follow the Hebrew. — *Ed.*

FT44 The words may be rendered, “the joy of the whole land,” *i.e.*, the land of Israel; which was strictly true. — *Ed.*

FT45 This verse begins with 𐤒, and the next with 𐤓; thus the alphabetical order is deranged. The same thing occurs in the two next chapters, though in the first chapter the usual order of the letters is preserved. Many conjectures have been made on the subject, but no satisfactory reason has been assigned. The *Targ.* and the early versions, except the *Syr.*, follow in the three places the present text; only the *Sept.*, very strangely, prefix the letters in their alphabetical order, and yet give the verses as they now are. When, added to this, we find the meaning favors the present arrangement, we cannot but conclude that it was the original one, though the reason why Jeremiah changed, as to these two letters, even in three instances, the alphabetical order, cannot now be discovered. — *Ed.*

FT46 Literally it is, —

And he hath made to rejoice over thee the enemy,
He hath exalted the horn of thine oppressors. — *Ed.*

FT47 The meaning suggested by the *Vulgate* is the most appropriate. The words may be rendered thus, —

Cried has their heart to the Lord,
“O the wall of the daughter of Sion !” —
Bring down like a torrent the tear, day and night;
Give no rest to thyself.
Let not cease the daughter of thine eye.

Their exclamation was, “O the wall,” etc. Then follow the words of Jeremiah to the end of the chapter; but the daughter of Sion, not the wall, is exhorted to weep and repent. “The daughter of the eye,” may be the tear, as suggested by *Blayney* and approved by *Horsley*; and it would be more suitable here. — *Ed.*

FT48 The simpler meaning, as stated by *Gataker*, is, “Rise” from thy bed; for she is exhorted to cry in the night. — *Ed.*

FT49 Rather, “who fainted through famine;” for he refers to what had taken place. — *Ed.*

FT50 *Educationum*. Our version is nearly the *Vulg.* It is paraphrased by the *Sept.*, “who suck the breasts;” and the *Targ.* is, “who are clad in silks.” *Blayney* rightly says, that **טפח** is the open palm of the hand; and he gives this as the literal rendering of the words, “children of palms;” that is, children of sufficient age to be carried about. His version of this line is, “Little ones dandled on the hands.” *Horsley* approves of this meaning.

The previous word, **פְּרִים**, has been a difficulty. to most, the final *mem* being masculine. “Fruit,” in the sense of offspring, is applied to men as well as to women. We may take the final *mem* in **נְשִׁים**, as a pronoun, “their wives;” the same are meant as in ^{<250218>} Lamentations 2:18, “their voice,” *i.e.*, the citizens of Jerusalem. Thus the construction will be quite grammatical.

Should their own wives eat their offspring,
Infants dandled on the hands!
Should they be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord,
The priest and the prophet!

It is the language of humble expostulation. — *Ed.*

CHAPTER 3

FT51 The verb for calling or summoning is in the future tense, and must, be so, to preserve the alphabetical character of the elegy, but it is rendered as in the past tense by all the versions, but the reason why does not appear. The future in Hebrew is often to be rendered as a subjunctive, potential, or optative: so here, —

Shouldst thou summon, as on a festival day,
My terrors all around! —
And there was not, in the day of Jehovah's wrath,
A fugitive or a survivor;
Whom I dandled and brought up,
My enemy has consumed them.

The first two lines are a kind of expostulation: “My terrors” mean my terrifiers, according to the *Vulg.*, the abstract for the concrete. — *Ed.*

FT52 The verses in this chapter are needlessly multiplied. It would have been better had each verse contained a letter, for the length of this chapter is the same with the two foregoing; the only difference is, that the lines, or alternate lines, begin with the same letter three times, as follows, —

⚡ I am the man who hath seen affliction,
Through the rod of his indignation;
⚡ Me hath he led and caused to walk
In darkness, and not in light;
⚡ Surely against me he turns,
Upset me does his hand all the day.

The three next lines, or alternate lines, begin with ג, and so on to the end of the alphabet — *Ed.*

FT53 The *Sept.*, the *Targ.*, and the *Arab.* render this “my head;” but the *Vulg.* and the *Syr.*, “gall.” It occurs again in ^{<250219>}Lamentations 2:19, and is rendered “gall” by the *Targ.* and all the versions. He was “surrounded with gall,” with what was bitter to him, and “with

faintness,” with what made him to faint. Hence, in the next verse, he represents himself as being like the dead. — *Ed.*

FT54 “Subverted” is the *Vulg.*, “obstructed” the *Sept.*, and “rendered oblique” the *Syr.* The meaning is, “turned aside.” he had built as it were a wall of hewn stones across his way, and thus he turned aside his goings or his paths, so that he was constrained to take some other course. — *Ed.*

FT55 The word, having the last letter doubled, means to turn aside again and again, “He has often turned aside my ways.” — *Ed.*

FT56 The word means grit or gravel, rendered “pebble” by the *Sept.*, and “stones” by the *Syr.* and the *Targ.* It is rendered “gravel” in ^{<202017>}Proverbs 20:17. The verb only occurs here and in Psalm 119.; and to wear out, is its most suitable meaning, —

And he hath worn out with grit my teeth. — *Ed.*

FT57 The verb rendered “covered,” is found only here, and is translated “fed” by the *Sept.* and *Vulg.*; “tumbled” or laid low, by the *Targ.*; and “besprinkled,” by the *Syr.* As he had said, that his food had been as it were grit, he could not have said that he was fed with ashes. Therefore the *arg.* or the *Syr.* is the most suitable, that God had laid him low in ashes, *Tr* that he had besprinkled or covered him with ashes. — *Ed*

FT58 The word “strength” is rendered “victory” by the *Sept.*, “end” by the *Vulg.*, “splendor by the *Syr.*, and valor by the *Targ.* means superiority, excellency, rather than strength, —

And I said, Perished hath my excellency,
And my expectation from Jehovah.

Whatever he had that was excellent had perished; and perished also had every good he expected from Jehovah. The meaning is not, that these things perished from Jehovah, but that his excellency and his expectation from Jehovah had perished. — *Ed.*

FT59 The verb “remember” is rendered as an imperative by the *Targ.*, the *Vulg.*, and the *Syr.*; and it is so rendered by *Henderson.* — *Ed.*

FT60 The pronoun “this” is by most referred to what the next verse contains; but as a clause intervenes, this can hardly be the meaning. The ^{<250319>}Lamentations 3:19, 20, and 21, I render thus,

19. Remember my affliction and my abasement,
The wormwood and the gall.

20. Remembering thou wilt remember them,
For bowed down within me is my soul:

21. This I recall to my mind;
Therefore will I hope.

He prays, then he expresses his confidence that God would hear his prayer; and “this” refers to the assurance he felt that God would remember his afflicted state, and on this ground he entertained hope. In the next verse he states what confirmed this hope: — *Ed.*

FT61 So the Targ. and all the versions, except the Vulg; they read תָּמוּ.

“The mercies of Jehovah” is the nominative case absolute, —

22. The mercies of Jehovah, verily they have no end,
For his compassion’s never fail.

23. Renewed (are they) in the morning;
Great is thy faithfulness.

“Renewed” refers to “mercies,” i.e., blessings, the fruit of mercy; and God’s mercies have no end, because his compassion’s ever continue. “In the morning,” that is, after a night of affliction. If the rendering be made literal, “in the mornings,” the meaning is the same; they follow the previous nights of trouble. Blessings, being as it were suspended or withheld during the night, are again renewed in the morning. — *Ed.*

FT62 There is more authority for the word for “wait” being in the singular than in the plural, as it is given in the Syr. — *Ed.*

FT63 It may be thus rendered, —

Good *it is* when he hopes and waits quietly
For the salvation of Jehovah.

The **י** may often be rendered when. This verse, the preceding, and following, begin with “good,” which renders the passage very striking,
—

25. Good is Jehovah to him who waits for him,
To the soul who seeks him:

26. Good it is when he hopes and waits quietly
For the salvation of Jehovah:

27. Good it is for man
That he bears the yoke in his youth. — *Ed.*

^{FT64} It is so found in the *Syr.*; but it comes to the same thing, if the verb be taken passively. in *Niphal*, — “Because it (the yoke mentioned before) has been laid on him.” *Blayney’s* version is, “When it is laid on him.” — *Ed.*

^{FT65} To lay the mouth in the dust, is a token of entire submission. Agreeably with this, the following words may be considered as spoken by the individual, —

He will lay in the dust his mouth (and say) —
“It may be there is hope.”

It is better to render the verbs here as they are, in the future tense, as all the versions do; for he describes what is usually the character of the godly under severe trials. — *Ed.*

^{FT66} That is, he will suffer himself to be filled with reproaches; he will submit to all reproaches. — *Ed.*

^{FT67} This verse is connected with ^{<250325>} Lamentations 3:25: “Good is Jehovah to him who waits for him;” and the reason is given here, “For not reject perpetually (or, for ever) will the Lord.” “For,” as assigning a reason, is here repeated three times, in this verse and in the two following verses; and they seem all to be reasons given for the truth contained in ^{<250325>} Lamentations 3:25,

31. For not reject perpetually
Will the Lord:

32. For though he afflicts, yet he will shew compassion
According to the multitude of his mercies:

33. For he does not depress from his heart,
Nor afflict the children of men.

All these particulars explain and elucidate the truth, that God is good. “From his heart,” does not mean “willingly,” but at his will, that is, arbitrarily, without reason, but when constrained by man’s wickedness. — *Ed.*

FT68 The order is here reverted. It is a common thing in Scripture to state first the chief thing, the chief good or evil. Here the greatest evil is mentioned first, the tearing under foot of such as were already bound, or imprisoned; then the sparing of the guilty; and thirdly, the withholding of justice to the righteous. To turn aside or divert judgment, is not to punish the guilty; and to wrong a person in his cause, is to deny his right. By “the bound,” or “prisoners of the earth,” or land, *Blayney* understands persons imprisoned for debt, who were obliged to work as slaves until they satisfied their creditors. See [401830](#) Matthew 18:30-34. Cruelty to such is referred to in [235803](#) Isaiah 58:3. — *Ed.*

FT69 The *Targ.* and the versions differ as to the import of this clause. The verb *to see*, has been taken to mean three things, — to know, to approve, and to regard or to notice. The *Vulgate* takes the first, our version the second, and *Calvin* the third. The context seems to favor the last meaning especially the following verses.

There is a difficulty as to the antecedent to the pronoun “his, before “feet.” It seems to refer to “man” in the last verse; for the words are, “the sons (or children) of man,” not of “men.” The verb רָאָה, when followed by עַל, means to look on, at, or simply to see. [196405](#) Psalm 64:5. Then the literal rendering of the passage would be as follows, —

On the tearing under his feet
Of all the bound of the land,
On the diverting of a man’s judgment,
In the presence of the most High,
On the wronging of a person in his cause
The Lord doth not look.

Or if the “on” be dropped, the last line may be,
The Lord doth not see.

This is manifestly the saying of unbelieving men, or of those weak in faith, as proved by the next verse, when rightly rendered. — *Ed.*

FT70 ‘The construction of these two verses is variously given. The verb rendered, “It was, or, “It came to pass,” if in the third person, is feminine, while it is usually and probably always masculine, when it has this meaning. It may be taken to be here in the second person. The literal rendering of the verse then would be, —

Who-he-saying (i.e., Who is he who says,) That thou art Lord,
ordering not, (i.e., who dost not order, or command.)

Then the following verse contains a continuation of what the objector said, —

From the mouth of the Highest
Cometh not the evil and the good.

The answer of the Prophet is in <250339> Lamentations 3:39, in which he intimates that God orders evil as a punishment for sin.

The objector’s declaration, that God as a Lord or Sovereign does not command or order events, and for this reason, because both evil and good cannot come from him, is a proof that *not to see* in <250336> Lamentations 3:36, is not to :regard or notice the affairs of men.
— *Ed.*

FT71 “Murmur” is the Sept. and the Vulg. The word only occurs here and in <041101> Numbers 11:1; and “complain” is the most suitable rendering in both places, —

**39. Why complain should man,
Any man alive, for his sin?**

That is, on account of suffering for his sin. Thus God is justified in ordaining or commanding evil as well as good, that is, the evil of punishment. — *Ed.*

FT72 The words literally rendered are very expressive, —
Let us uncover our ways, and search.

The cover was first to be stripped off, and then was a search to be made as to the character of their ways. — *Ed.*

FT73 To give the proper emphasis to the pronoun, the version ought to be as follows, —

We, transgressed have we rebelled. — *Ed.*

FT74 To “cover” is the idea given to the verb by the *Sept.*, the *Vulg.*, the *Syr.*, and the *Targ.*; but *Blayney* and some others take it in the sense of fencing in, enclosing, in allusion to the practice of hunters; and the next verb, which means to pursue, to chase, favors this meaning, —

Thou hast in wrath enclosed and chased us,
Thou hast slain and not spared.

Then the same verb begins the next verse, —

Thou hast enclosed thyself in a cloud,
That prayer might not pass through. — *Ed.*

FT75 There are circumstances, no doubt, according to God’s word, under which God does not hear prayer: and (his seems to have been an instance of this kind . — *Ed.*

FT76 Let the verb have a causative sense, to cause to descend, to bring down, and there will be no difficulty in the clause; so the *Sept.* and the *Vulg.*, —

Streams of water does mine eyes bring down
For the breach of the daughter of my people, — *Ed.*

FT77 The connection of this verse with the preceding will be more evident from the following version, —

49. Mine eye hath poured down, and it will not cease,
With any intermissions,

50. Until Jehovah look down
And see from heaven.

To “see” here, as in ^{<250336>} Lamentations 3:36, means to regard, so as to interfere in the affairs of men. “with any,” etc., literally, “With no,” etc. But the English language not admit of the two negatives, though the Welsh will. — *Ed.*

FT78 The versions and the *Targ.* give the first meaning, “because of the daughters of my city;” and the last words, “of my city,” seem to favor it; for had women as a sex been intended, they would not have been thus designated. — *Ed.*

FT79 The words literally are, —

Hunting hunted me like a bird
have mine enemies without a cause. — *Ed.*

FT80 Materially correct, no doubt, is this explanation. We may give this version, —

My voice hast thou heard, deafen not thy ear
To my sighing, to my cry.

The verb **עלם** means to veil, and hence to hide. To veil the eye is, not to look at what is set before it; and to veil the ear is, to render it deaf to what is said. The Prophet says that God had heard his voice, for he had prayed; but he further asks God not to turn a deaf ear to his sighing, or sobbing, as given by the *Vulg.* and to his cry. — *Ed.*

FT81 There is no necessity, as some have supposed, of making **לִי** in the former verse, and **עָלִי** in this verse, the same. The difference is occasioned by the verbs “thou hast seen,” and, “thou hast heard.” God had seen the thoughts or purposes effected “against” him; and he had heard the purposes formed “concerning” him. He refers first to the purposes carried into effect, and then, as it is common in the prophets, he refers to the purposes previously formed respecting him. — *Ed.*

FT82 The best word is muttering, —

The lips of my adversaries,
And their muttering concerning me all the day.

It isn't here, as in the previous verse, “concerning me,” not “against me.” — *Ed.*

FT83 The word meant “covering, as rendered by the *Sept.*; the Syr. Has “sorrow,” and the *Vulg.* “shield,” which has no meaning. What is no doubt meant is hardness or blindness —

Give them blindness of heart:
Thy curse be to them. — *Ed.*

CHAPTER 4

FT84 Here, as in the two first chapters, the verses only begin alphabetically, but instead of having three or six lines, they have only two or four. — *Ed.*

FT85 . This chapter, like the two first chapters, begins with the word **איכה**, “How this!” and the verbs are in the future tense, used for the present.

How *is* this! tarnished is gold,
Changed is fine gold, the best:
Cast forth are the sacred stones
At the head of every street. — *Ed.*

FT86 The value, and not the appearance, is evidently meant: the “sons of Sion” were “precious,” as here expressly stated. In this respect they had been of the same estimate with gold; but now they were as worthless as potter’s vessels: they were so esteemed and treated, —

The sons of Sion *were* precious,
Of worth equal to pure gold;
How is this! they have been deemed as earthen vessels,
The work of the hands of the potter. — *Ed.*

FT87 The reference here is to the conduct of mothers, called here “the daughter of my people,” as it appears evident from the following verse,

Even dragons have drawn out the breast,
They have suckled their young ones:
The daughter of my people *has been* for cruelty
Like the ostriches in the desert.

It is said that the ostrich lays her eggs and forsakes them. See **<183915>** Job 39:15. The verb, to be, is understood, as the case often is, but it must ever be in the same tense as the verb or verbs connected with the sentence. — *Ed.*

FT88 The verbs here are in the past tense, and not in the present, as in our version, —

Cleave did the tongue of the suckling
To his palate through thirst;
Children asked bread,
A breaker, none *was* to them. — *Ed.*

FT89 The dunghills were collections of cow-dung and other things heaped together for fuel instead of wood. They had been brought up “on scarlet,” *i.e.*, on scarlet couches, they were now glad to lie down anywhere, even on dunghills, and hence they are said to have embraced them, as though they had a love for them, —

They who had fed on delicacies
Perished in the streets;
They who had been brought up on scarlet
Embraced the dunghills. — *Ed.*

FT90 The early versions and the *Targ.* render the words “iniquity,” and “sin;” but modern critics agree with *Calvin*. Penalty and punishment might be suitably adopted. — *Ed.*

FT91 The clause might be rendered, —
And not wearied against (or, over) her were hands.

This is substantially the *Sept.* and the *Syr.* *Grotius* says that the meaning is, that Sodom was destroyed not by human means, that is, not by a siege, as Jerusalem had been. — *Ed.*

FT92 As to these two verses there is much disagreement in the early versions and the *Targ.*; that of the *Sept.* comes nearest to the original. They may be thus rendered, —

7. Clearer were her Nazarites than snow,
They were whiter than milk;
Ruddier were they in body than rubies,
Sapphire was their polish (or smoothness:)

8. Darker than the dusk became their appearance,
They were not known in the streets:
Cleave did their skin to their bones,
Dried up, it became like a stick.

“Rubies,” rendered “pearls,” by *Bochart*; “load stones,” or magnets, by *Parkhurst*; “red corals,” by *Gesenius*. They were no doubt precious stones of reddish appearance. The “sapphire” is mentioned for its smoothness, as it appears from the contrast at the end of the eighth verse, where it is said that their skin had become like a dried “stick,” whose rind is shriveled. “*Dusk*” is rendered “*soot*” by the *Sept.*, and “coals” by the *Vulg.* and the *Syr.* שחור is the dusk, or the dawn: but the river Nile is also thus called on account of its muddy and dusky waters. See <240218> Jeremiah 2:18. This being the case, may it not be so taken here.; The character of the passage favors this, “snow,” “milk,” etc. Then the line would be, —

Darker than Sihor (or, the Nile) became their appearance. — *Ed.*

FT93 *Houbigant* and *Blayney* have given the following version of this clause, which has been approved by *Horsley*, —

For those (the former) departed, having been cut off
Before the fruits of the field.

That is, they had been cut off before the fruits of the field failed, which occasioned the famine. This rendering is more satisfactory than our version or that of *Calvin*. — *Ed.*

FT94 This clause has been variously explained. The whole passage from <250412> Lamentations 4:12-16 inclusive, ought to be considered. The taking of Jerusalem is said to have been incredible, even to heathens. Then the Prophet, in <250413> Lamentations 4:13, tells the cause — “the sins of the prophets and the iniquities of the priests;” and in <250414> Lamentations 4:14, 15, and 16, he describes their shame and their punishment at the siege, when the people found out by experience that they had been deceived by them, —

13. For the sins of her prophets,
For the iniquities of her priests,
Who had shed in the midst of her
The blood of the righteous, —

14. They wandered frantic in the streets,
They were (or, had been) polluted with blood:

Inasmuch as they could not
But touch their garments,

15. “Depart ye, uncleanness,” they cried to them,
“Depart, depart, touch not:”
When they fled, yea, became fugitives,
They said among the heathens,
“They shall no more dwell *there*”;

16. The face of Jehovah, their portion,
Shall no more look on them;
The face of their priests they regard not,
To their elders they shew no favor.”

The last five lines contain what the heathens said, when they observed that the prophets and the priests were pronounced unclean by the people, and were ordered to depart. They had shed blood, and were thus polluted, or in their frenzy they touched the slain and became thus polluted. Their retribution was just, and rendered to them by their own people, whom they had led astray: for instead of attending to the true prophets, they killed them, and flattered the people with falsehoods, and encouraged them in their idolatry and vices; and thus brought on the ruin of a city deemed impregnable. — *Ed.*

FT95 The true reading is no doubt עֲדִינוּ; and *Blayney* thinks that there is a
ו wanting before the next verb, as it is in other in other instances;
<110114> 1 Kings 1:14, 22; <180116> Job 1:16, 17, 18. It is supplied in the
Sept., *Syr.*, and *Vulg.*

Yet we *were*, and fail did our eyes
As to our assistance;
In vain by looking out did we look out
To a nation that could not save.

The *Syr.* connect “in vain,” more properly, with the third line. — *Ed.*

FT96 He describes throughout what had taken place. Our version is not
right in giving the verbs in the present tense. “For” is better than
“surely” before “come.”

They hunted our footsteps,
That we could not walk in our streets:

Near was our end; fulfilled were our days,
For come had our end.

Then he describes what happened when the city was taken. — *Ed.*

FT97 A kingdom cannot exist without a king. Hence the king may be said to be the breath or the life of the body politic. — *Ed.*

FT98 The last clause ought to be thus rendered, —
Under whose shadow, we said,
We shall live among the nations.

The *Syr.* in some measure imitates the original, but neither the *Sept.* nor the *Vulg.* The אֲשֶׁר is not governed by “we said.” It can be rendered literally in Welsh. — *Ed.*

FT99 This is the sense that is commonly taken: *Gataker*, *Lowth*, *Scott*, and *Blayney*, regard the expression as ironical. — *Ed.*

FT100 The word “iniquity” is used in this verse in two senses. This we discover by the two verbs which are used. To complete “iniquity” can here mean no other thing than to complete the punishment due to it; and that punishment was exile, as the following words shew. But to “visit” iniquity clearly means to punish it. —

Completed has been thine iniquity, daughter of Sion;
He will not again remove thee:
He has visited thine iniquity, daughter of Edom;
Having been removed for thy sins,
or, — He has removed *thee* for thy sins.

Though all the early versions and the *Targ.* agree in rendering the last verb in the sense of discovering or uncovering, yet the other meaning, which it often has, and even in the second line of this verse, is more suitable to this place. Removal or migration had been the punishment of the Jews: the same was to be the punishment of Edom. In this sense is the word rendered by *Blayney* and *Henderson*. The past time in the latter clause is evidently used for the future, according to the usual manner of the Prophets, “He will visit,” etc., “he will remove, *etc.* — *Ed.*

CHAPTER 5

FT101 O domus Anci! Quam dispari domino dominaris!

FT102 To express this meaning, which is probably the true one, the words ought to be thus rendered, —

4. Our own water, for money have we drunk *it*;
Our own wood, for a price it comes *to us*.

Grotius says that in the land of Canaan the forests were free to all to get wood from. When in exile the Jews had to buy wood. — *Ed.*

FT103 Not one of the versions or the Targ., though they all differ, gives a satisfactory rendering of this clause. Some take, “on our neck we have been pursued,” as meaning, We have been closely pursued. So *Gataker*. Others, as *Lowth* and *Henderson*, regarding עַל a noun, signifying a yoke, give a construction of this kind, “With the yoke on our neck we have been pursued” or persecuted, according to the words of Moses in <052848> Deuteronomy 28:48. The former seems the best, —

On our neck (closely) have we been pursued,
We labored and had no rest.

Then comes in what they did when thus pursued by their enemies, —
To Egypt gave we the hand,
To Assyria, to be satisfied with bread.

To give the hand, in this case, was to put it forth as suppliants to ask help. This seems to refer to a, time previous to their exile. — *Ed.*

FT104 Horace, *Od.* 6:1, —

“*Delicta majorum immeritus lues, Romane.*”

FT105 Virgil, *Georg.*, lib. 1, —

“*Satis jampridem sanguine nostro
Laomedontae luimus perjurio Troiae.*”

FT106 The words may be thus rendered, —

Our fathers, they sinned and are not;
We, their iniquities have we borne.

To bear iniquities, is here evidently to bear their penalty. So when Christ is said to bear our sins, the same thing is meant. — *Ed.*

FT107 See <160515> Nehemiah 5:15. — *Ed.*

FT108 The versions and the *Targ.* render the word, “sword;” and so do *Gataker*, *Blayney*, and *Henderson*. And by “the sword of the desert” are to be understood freebooters who carried swords and made incursions from desert places.

At the risk of our life we got our bread,
On account of the sword of the desert. — *Ed.*

FT109 The word זלעפות, occurs in <191106> Psalm 11:6, and in the singular number in Psalm 119: 53. The versions and the *Targ.* render it differently in the three places, for it is not found anywhere else. In <19B953> Psalm 119:53, it is rendered “horror” in our version, and this meaning suits the passage in <191106> Psalm 11:6, and also this passage,

Our skins, like an oven they became black,
Because of the horrors of famine (or, horrible famine.)

The word for “skins” is in the plural number according to several copies, and the verb requires it to be so. — *Ed.*

FT110 There is here a delicate word for a disgraceful act. The words literally are, —

Women in Sion they humbled (or, were humbled,)
And virgins in the cities of Judah.

It is humbled by the *Sept.* and *Vulg.* “And” before “virgins” is supplied by the *Vulg.* and *Syr.* — *Ed.*

FT111 The most obvious meaning of the words is, that princes were hung or suspended by the hand, and not by the neck. Such a punishment is not recorded as having *been* then practiced; but it may have been a barbarity resorted to by the Chaldeans. This seems to be the meaning conveyed by the versions and the *Targ.*, —

Princes were by their hand hung up,
The persons of the aged were not honored. — *Ed.*

FT112 The words ought rather to be thus rendered, —
Turned into mourning was our piping.

The word does not mean dancing, but playing on some fistular instrument. — *Ed.*

FT113 The words are, —
Fallen has the crown of our head.

Then the “woe” in the next line is only declarative, —
Woe *is* now to us, because we have sinned.

The particle “now” is omitted in our version. — *Ed.*

FT114 Some connect this verse with the foregoing, as a special reason why their eyes were darkened, —

17. For this become faint did our heart;
For these things darkened were our eyes,

18. Yea, for mount Sion, which is desolate;
Foxes have walked through it.

“This” was the “woe” which sin had brought; and “these things” were the various things which he had previously stated, but the desolation of mount Sion was the chief cause of sorrow.

Others take this verse by itself, as it is done by the *Sept.*, where על is rendered “on,” and ש for אשר, is translated “because,” —

On mount Sion, because it has become desolate,
Foxes have walked in (or through) it.

If על be rendered concerning, or, as to, or, with regard to, the best construction would be the following, —

As to mount Sion, which has become desolate,
Foxes have walked in it (or, traversed it.) — *Ed.*

FT115 The words literally are, —

Thou Jehovah for ever sittest,
Thy throne *is* from generation to generation.

Sitting is the posture of a judge, and the reference here is to Jehovah, not as to his essence or existence, but as to his judicial office. — *Ed.*

FT116

Why shouldest thou to the end forget us —
Forsake us for the length of our days?

“To the end,” or perpetually, and “the length of our days,” are the same. The length of days, as it appears from ^{<192306>} Psalm 23:6, means the extent of the present life; the phrase is there used as synonymous with all the days of one’s life. Might not the Prophet here refer to the life of those then living? As to restoration after seventy years, he could have had no doubt. He seems to have pleaded for the restoration of the generation then living. — *Ed.*

FT117 The meaning of this sentence is,” says *Grotius*, “Restore us to thy favor, that we may be restored to our ancient state.” This being evidently the meaning, the rendering ought to be this, —

Restore us, O Jehovah, to thyself, that we may be restored.

And as *Calvin*, as well as *Grotius*, says, the following line is a confirmation, —

Renew our days as of old. — *Ed.*

FT118 The particles, כִּי אֵם, seem to have the meaning of “except,” as in ^{<013226>} Genesis 32:26, “except thou bless me.” But the exposition is too refined. The usual meaning of the particles is, *but in truth, for surely, when indeed*. See ^{<092105>} 1 Samuel 21:5; ^{<202318>} Proverbs 23:18; ^{<022223>} Exodus 22:23. They are rendered here, “for,” by the *Sept.*, *Syr.*, and *Arab*; “but,” by the *Vulg.*, and “although,” by the *Targ*. The version of *Blayney* and *Henderson* is, “For surely.” The Prophet assigns a reason for his petition in the preceding verse; as though he had said, “I ask for restoration to thy favor and to our land, because thou hast clearly manifested thy rejection of us, and thy displeasure towards us.”

For surely rejecting thou hast rejected us,
Thou hast been wroth with us exceedingly,

or, more literally,

Thou hast foamed against us exceedingly.

The first line here corresponds with the latter part of the previous verse, "Restore us to our land, and renew the ancient days," — "Thou hast wholly rejected us." He speaks of things as they were then. Then the last line in this verse bears a relation to the first part of the preceding verse, "Restore us to thy favor," — "Thou hast been exceedingly displeased with us." Thus, for displeasure he asked favor, and for repudiation, a restoration. — *Ed.*