

THE AGES DIGITAL LIBRARY
COMMENTARY

**COMMENTARY
ON THE PROPHET
MALACHI**

by John Calvin

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

THE COMMENTARIES
OF JOHN CALVIN
ON THE PROPHET
MALACHI

*Now First Translated From The Original Latin, By The Rev. John
Owen, Vicar Of Thrussington, Leicestershire.*

CALVIN'S PREFACE TO MALACHI

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-NINTH

THE BOOK OF MALACHI follows, whom many have imagined to have been an angel, on account of his name. We indeed know that מלאך, *Melac*, in Hebrew is an Angel; but how absurd is such a supposition, it is easy to see; for the Lord at that time did not send angels to reveal his oracles, but adopted the ordinary ministry of men; and as ך, is added at the end of the word, as it was usual in proper names, we may indeed hence conclude that it was the name of a man; at the same time I freely allow that it may have been added for some particular reason not known to us now. I am more disposed to grant what some have said, that he was EZRA, and that MALACHI was his surname, for God had called him to do great and remarkable things.

However this may be, he was no doubt one of the Prophets, and, as it appears, the last; for at the end of his Book he exhorts the people to continue in their adherence to the pure doctrine of the Law: and this he did, because God was not afterwards to send Prophets in succession as before; for it was his purpose that the Jews should have a stronger desire for Christ, they having been for a time without any Prophets.^{fi} It was indeed either a token of God's wrath, or a presage of Christ's coming, when they were deprived of that benefit which Moses mentions in Deuteronomy 18; for God had then promised to send Prophets, that the Jews might know that he cared for their safety. When therefore God left his people without Prophets, it was either to show his great displeasure, as during the Babylonian exile, or to hold them in suspense, that they might with stronger desire look forward to the coming of Christ.

However we may regard this, I have no doubt but he was the last of the Prophets; for he bids the people to adhere to the doctrine of the Law until Christ should be revealed.

The sum and substance of the Book is, — that though the Jews had but lately returned to their own country, they yet soon returned to their own nature, became unmindful of God's favor, and so gave themselves up to many corruptions; that their state was nothing better than that of their fathers before them, so that God had as it were lost all his labor in chastising them. As then the Jews had again relapsed into many vices, our Prophet severely reproveth them, and upbraids them with ingratitude, because they rendered to God their deliverer so shameful a recompense. He also mentions some of their sins, that he might prove the people to be guilty, for he saw that they were full of evasions. And he addresses the priests, who had by bad examples corrupted the morals of the people, when yet their office required a very different course of life; for the Lord had set them over the people to be teachers of religion and of uprightness; but from them did emanate a great portion of the vices of the age; and hence our Prophet the more severely condemns them.

He shows at the same time that God would remember his gratuitous covenant, which he had made with their fathers, so that the Redeemer would at length come. — This is the substance of the whole: I come now to the words. —

CHAPTER 1

<390101>MALACHI 1:1

1. The burden of the word of the Jehovah to Israel by Malachi.

1. Onus sermonis Iehovae ad Israel in manu Maleachi.

THEY who explain מִשָּׁא, *mesha*, burden, as signifying prophecy, without exception, are mistaken, as I have elsewhere reminded you; for prophecy is not everywhere called a burden; and whenever this word is expressed, there is ever to be understood some judgment of God; and it appears evident from <242338> Jeremiah 23:38, that this word was regarded as ominous, so that the ungodly, when they wished to brand the Prophets with some mark of reproach, used this as a common proverb, "It is a burden," intimating thereby that nothing else was brought by the Prophets but threatenings and terrors, in order that they might have some excuse for closing their ears, and for evading all prophecies by giving them an unhappy and ominous name.

As we proceed it will become evident that the doctrine of Malachi is not without reason called a Burden; for as I have stated in part, and as it will be more fully seen hereafter, it was necessary that the people should be summoned before God's tribunal, inasmuch as many sins had again begun to prevail among them, and such as could not be endured: and for this reason he says that God's judgment was at hand.

But under the name of *Israel* he refers only to those who had returned to their own country, whether they were of the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, or of the tribe of Levi. It is nevertheless probable that there were also some mixed with them from the other tribes: but the Jews and their neighbors, the half tribe of Benjamin, had almost alone returned to their country, with the exception of the Levites, who had been their guides in their journey, and encouraged the rest of the people. They were yet called Israel indiscriminately, since among them only pure religion continued: but they who remained dispersed among foreign and heathen nations, had as it were lost their name, though they had not wholly departed from the pure worship of God and true religion. Hence, by way of excellency, they were

called Israel, who had again assembled in the holy land, that they might there enjoy the inheritance promised them from above.

The word *hand*, as we have observed elsewhere, means ministration. The meaning then is, that this doctrine proceeded from God, but that a minister, even Malachi, was employed as an instrument; so that he brought nothing as his own, but only related faithfully what had been committed to him by God from whom it came. It then follows —

<390102>MALACHI 1:2-6	
2. I have loved you, saith the Lord: yet ye say, Wherein best thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob,	2. Dilexi vos, dicit Jehovah; et dixistis, In quo dilexisti nos? Annon frater Esau erat ipsi Jacob? dicit Jehova; et dilexi Jacob,
3. And I hated Esau, and laid his molmtains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.	3. Et Esau odio habui; et posui montes ejus solitudinem, et haereditatem ejus serpentibus desertum (alii vertunt, deserti.)
4. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord has indignation for ever.	4. Si dixerit Edom, Attenuati sumus, sed revertemur, et aedificabimus deserta: sic dicit Iehova exercituum, Ipsi aedificabunt, et ego diruam; et dicetur illis, Terminus impietatis et populus cui infensus est Iehova in perpetuum.
5. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel.	5. Et oculi vestri videbunt, et vos dicetis, Magnificabitur Iehova super terminum Israel. (Addendus etiam sextus versus, saltem initium:)
6. A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?	6. Filius honorat patrem, et servus dominum suum; et si pater ego, ubi honor meus? et si dominus ego, ubi timor mei? dicit Iehova exercituum ad vos, O sacerdotes, qui contemnitis nomen meum: et dixistis, In quo contempsimus nomen tuum?

I am constrained by the context to read all these verses; for the sense cannot be otherwise completed. God expostulates here with a perverse and an ungrateful people, because they doubly deprived him of his right; for he was neither loved nor feared, though he had a just claim to the name and honor of a master as well as that of a father. As then the Jews paid him no reverence, he complains that he was defrauded of his right as a father; and as they entertained no fear for him, he condemns them for not acknowledging, him as their Lord and Master, by submitting to his authority. But before he comes to this, he shows that he was both their Lord and Father; and he declares that he was especially their Father, because he loved them.

We now then understand the Prophet's intention; for God designed to show here how debased the Jews were, as they acknowledged him neither as their Father nor as their Lord; they neither revered him as their Lord, nor regarded him as their Father. But he brings forward, as I have already said, his benefits, by which he proves that he deserved the honor due to a father and to a master.

Hence he says, *I loved you*. God might indeed have made an appeal to the Jews on another ground; for had he not manifested his love to them, they were yet bound to submit to his authority. He does not indeed speak here of God's love generally, such as he shows to the whole human race; but he condemns the Jews, inasmuch as having been freely adopted by God as his holy and peculiar people, they yet forgot this honor, and despised the Giver, and regarded what he taught them as nothing. When therefore God says that he loved the Jews, we see that his object was to convict them of ingratitude for having despised the singular favor bestowed on them alone, rather than to press that authority which he possesses over all mankind in common. God then might have thus addressed them, "I have created you, and have been to you a kind Father; by my favor does the sun shine on you daily, and the earth produces its fruit; in a word, I hold you bound to me by innumerable benefits." God might have thus spoken to them; but as I have said, his object was to bring forward the gratuitous adoption with which he had favored the seed of Abraham; for it was a less endurable impiety, that they had despised so incomparable a favor; inasmuch as God had preferred them to all other nations, not on the ground of merit or of any worthiness, but because it had so pleased him. This then is the reason why the Prophet begins by saying, that the Jews had been *loved* by God:

for they had made the worst return for this gratuitous favor, when they despised his doctrine. This is the first thing.

There is further no doubt but that he indirectly condemns their ingratitude when he says, *In what hast thou loved us?* The words indeed may be thus explained — “If ye say, or if ye ask, In what have I loved you? Even in this — I preferred your father Jacob to Esau, when yet they were twin brothers.” But we shall see in other places that the Jews by evasions malignantly obscured God’s favor, and that this wickedness is in similar words condemned. Hence the Prophet, seeing that he had to do with debased men, who would not easily yield to God nor acknowledge his kindness by a free and ingenuous confession, introduces them here as speaking thus clamorously, “He! when hast thou loved us! in what! the tokens of thy love do not appear.” He answers in God’s name, *Esau was Jacob’s brother; and yet I loved Jacob, and Esau I hated.*”

We now see what I have just referred to, — that the Jews are reminded of God’s gratuitous covenant, that they might cease to excuse their wickedness in having misused this singular favor. He does not then upbraid them here, because they had been as other men created by God, because God caused his sun to shine on them, because they were supplied with food from the earth; but he says, that they had been preferred to other people, not on account of their own merit, but because it had pleased God to choose their father Jacob. He might have here adduced Abraham as an example; but as Jacob and Esau proceeded from Abraham, with whom God had made the covenant, his favor was the more remarkable, inasmuch as though Abraham had been alone chosen by God, and other nations were passed by, yet from the very family which the Lord had adopted, one had been chosen while the other was rejected. When a comparison is made between Esau and Jacob, we must bear in mind that they were brothers; but there are other circumstances to be noticed, which though not expressed here by the Prophet, are yet well known: for all the Jews knew that Esau was the first-born; and that hence Jacob had obtained the right of primogeniture contrary to the order of nature. As then this was commonly known, the Prophet was content to use only this one sentence, *Esau was Jacob’s brother.*

But he says that Jacob was chosen by God, and that his brother, the first-born, was rejected. If the reason be asked, it is not to be found in their

descent, for they were twin brothers; and they had not come forth from the womb when the Lord by an oracle testified that Jacob would be the greater. We hence see that the origin of all the excellency which belonged to the posterity of Abraham, is here ascribed to the gratuitous love of God, according to what Moses often said, “ Not because ye excelled other nations, or were more in number, has God honored you with so many benefits; but because he loved your fathers.” The Jews then had always been reminded, that they were not to seek for the cause of their adoption but in the gratuitous favor of God; he had been pleased to choose them — this was the source of their salvation. We now understand the Prophet’s design when he says, that *Esau was Jacob’s brother*,^{f2} and yet was not loved by God.

We must at the same time bear in mind what I have already said — that this singular favor of God towards the children of Jacob is referred to, in order to make them ashamed of their ingratitude, inasmuch as God had set his love on objects so unworthy. For had they been deserving, they might have boasted that a reward was rendered to them; but as the Lord had gratuitously and of his own good pleasure conferred this benefit on them, their impiety was the less excusable. This baseness then is what our Prophet now reprobates.

Then follows a proof of hatred as to Esau, the Lord *made his mountain a desolation, and his inheritance a desert where serpents dwelt*. Esau, we know, when driven away by his own shame, or by his father’s displeasure, came to Mount Seir; and the whole region where his posterity dwelt was rough and enclosed by many mountains. But were any to object and say, that this was no remarkable token of hatred, as it might on the other hand be said, that the love of God towards Jacob was not much shown, because he dwelt in the land of Canaan, since the Chaldeans inhabited a country more pleasant and more fruitful, and the Egyptians also were very wealthy; to this the answer is — that the land of Canaan was a symbol of God’s love, not only on account of its fruitfulness, but because the Lord had consecrated it to himself and to his chosen people. So Jerusalem was not superior to other cities of the land, either to Samaria or Bethlehem, or other towns, on account of its situation, for it stood, as it is well known, in a hilly country, and it had only the spring of Siloam, from which flowed a small stream; and the view was not so beautiful, nor its fertility great; at the same time it excelled in other things. for God had chosen it as his

sanctuary; and the same must be said of the whole land. As then the land of Canaan was, as it were, a pledge of an eternal inheritance to the children of Abraham, the scripture on this account greatly extols it, and speaks of it in magnificent terms. If Mount Seir was very wealthy and replenished with everything delightful, it must have been still a sad exile to the Idumeans, because it was a token of their reprobation; for Esau, when he left his father's house, went there; and he became as it were an alien, having deprived himself of the celestial inheritance, as he had sold his birthright to his brother Jacob. This is the reason why God declares here that Esau was dismissed as it were to the mountains, and deprived of the Holy Land which God had destined to his chosen people.

But the Prophet also adds another thing, — that God's hatred as manifested when the posterity of Esau became extinct. For though the Assyrians and Chaldeans had no less cruelly raged against the Jews than against the Edomites, yet the issue was very different; for after seventy years the Jews returned to their own country, as Jeremiah had promised: yet Idumea was not to be restored, but the tokens of God's dreadful wrath had ever appeared there in its sad desolations. Since then there had been no restoration as to Idumea, the Prophet shows that by this fact the love of God towards Jacob and his hatred towards Esau had been proved; for it had not been through the contrivance of men that the Jews had liberty given them, and that they were allowed to build the temple; but because God had chosen them in the person of Jacob, and designed them to be a peculiar and holy people to himself.

But as to the Edomites, it became then only more evident that they had been rejected in the person of Esau, since being once laid waste they saw that they were doomed to perpetual destruction. This is then the import of the Prophet's words when he says, that the possession of Esau had been given to *serpents*. For, as I have already said, though for a time the condition of Judea and of Idumea had not been unlike, yet when Jerusalem began to rise and to be repaired, then God clearly showed that that land had not been in vain given to his chosen people. But when the neighboring country was not restored, while yet the posterity of Esau might with less suspicion have repaired their houses, it became hence sufficiently evident that the curse of God was upon them.

And to the same purpose he adds, *If Edom shall say, We have been diminished, but we shall return and build houses; but if they build, I will pull down, saith God.* He confirms what I have stated, that the posterity of Edom had no hope of restoration, for however they might gather courage and diligently labor in rebuilding their cities, they were not yet to succeed, for God would pull down all their buildings. This difference then was like a living representation, by which the Jews might see the love of God towards Jacob, and his hatred towards Esau. For since both people were overthrown by the same enemy, how was it that liberty was given to the Jews and no permission was given to the Idumeans to return to their own country? There was, as it has been said, a greater ill-will to the Jews, and yet the Chaldeans dealt with them more kindly. It then follows, that all this was owing to the wonderful purpose of God, and that hence it also appeared, that the adoption, which seemed to have been abolished when the Jews were driven into exile, was not in vain.

Thus then saith Jehovah of hosts, They shall build, that is, though they may build, I will overthrow; and it shall be said to them, Border of ungodliness, and a people with whom Jehovah is angry for ever. By the border of ungodliness he means an accursed border; as though he had said, “It will openly appear that you are reprobate, so that the whole world can form a judgment by the event itself.” By adding, *A people with whom Jehovah is angry* or displeased, he again confirms what I have said of love and hatred. God might indeed have been equally angry with the Jews as with the Edomites, but when God became pacified towards the Jews, while he continued inexorable to the posterity of Esau, the difference between the two people was hence quite manifest.

Noticed also must be the words, **עַד-עוֹלָם**, *od-oulam*, for ever: for God seemed for a time to have rejected the Jews, and the Prophets adopt the same word **זַעַם**, *som*, angry, when they deplore the condition of the peep[e], who found in various ways that God was angry with them. But the wrath of God towards the Jews was only for a time, for he did not wholly forget his covenant; but he became angry with the Edomites for ever, because their father had been rejected: and we know that this difference between the elect and the reprobate is ever pointed out, that when God visits sins in common, he ever moderates his wrath towards his elect, and sets limits to his severity, according to what he says, “If his posterity keep not my covenant, but profane my law, I will chastise them

with the rod of man; but my mercy will I not take away from him.”
(^{<198931>}Psalm 89:31-33 ^{<100714>}2 Samuel 7:14.) But with regard to the reprobate, God’s vengeance ever pursues them, is ever suspended over their heads, and ever fixed as it were in their bones and marrow. For this reason it is that our Prophet says, that God would be angry with the posterity of Esau.

He adds, *Your eyes shall see*. The Jews had already begun in part to witness this spectacle, but the Prophet speaks here of what was to continue. *See* then *shall your eyes*; that is, “As it has already appeared of what avail gratuitous election has been to you, by which I have chosen you as my people, and as ye have also seen on the other hand how it has been with your relations the Edomites, because they had been rejected in the person of their father Esau; so also this same difference shall ever be evident to you in their posterity: *see* then *shall your eyes*.”

And ye shall say, Magnified let Jehovah be over the border of Israel; that is, “The event itself will extort this confession, — that I greatly enhance my goodness towards you.” For though tokens of God’s grace shone forth everywhere, and the earth, as the Psalmist says, is full of his goodness, (^{<19A424>}Psalm 104:24;) yet there was in Judea something special, so that our Prophet does not in vain say, that there would be always reasons for the Jews to celebrate God’s praises on account of his bounty to them more than to the rest of the world. And the Prophet no doubt reproves here indirectly the wickedness of the people, as though he had said, — “Ye indeed, as far as you can, bury God’s benefits, or at least extenuate them; but facts themselves must draw from you this confession — that God deals bountifully with the border of Israel, that he exercises there his favor more remarkably than among any of the nations.”

After having briefly referred to those benefits which ought to have filled the Jews with shame, he comes at length to the subject he had in view; for his main object, as I have already stated, was to show, that it was God’s complaint that he was deprived of his own right and in a double sense, for the Jews did not reverence him as their Father, nor fear him as their Lord. He might indeed have called himself Lord and Father by the right of creation; but he preferred, as I have already explained, to appeal to their adoption; for it was a remarkable favor, when the Lord chose some out of all the human race; and we cannot say that the cause of this was to be

found in men. Whom then he designs to choose, he binds to himself by a holier bond. But if they disappoint him, wholly inexcusable is their perfidy.

As we now understand the Prophet's meaning, and the object of this expostulation, it remains for us to learn how to accommodate what is taught to ourselves. We are not indeed descended from Abraham or from Jacob according to the flesh; but as God has engraved on us certain marks of his adoption, by which he has distinguished us from other nations, while we were yet nothing better, we hence see that we are justly exposed to the same reproof with the Jews, if we do not respond to the calling of God. I wished thus briefly to touch on this point, in order that we may know that this doctrine is no less useful to us at this day than it was to the Jews; for though the adoption is not exactly the same, as it then belonged to one seed and to one family, yet we are not superior to others through our own worthiness, but because God has gratuitously chosen us as a people to himself. Since this has been the case, we are his; for he has redeemed us by the blood of his own Son, and by rendering us partakers, by the gospel, of a favor so ineffably great, he has made us his sons and his servants. Except then we love and reverence him as our Father, and except we fear him as our Lord, there is found in us at this day an ingratitude no less base than in that ancient people. But as I wished now only to refer to the chief point, I shall speak tomorrow, as the passage requires, on the subject of election: but it was necessary first briefly to show the Prophet's design, as I have done; and then to treat particular points more at large, as the case may require.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast not only designed to give us a life in common in this world but hast also separated us from other heathen nations, and illuminated us by the Sun of Righteousness, thine only begotten Son, in order to lead us into the inheritance of eternal salvation, — O grant, that having been rescued from the darkness of death, we may ever attend to that celestial light, by which thou guidest and invitest us to thyself; and may we so walk as the children of light, as never to wander from the course of our holy calling, but to advance in it continually, until we shall at length reach the goal which thou hast set before us, so

that having put off all the filth of the flesh, we may be transformed into that ineffable glory, of which we have now the image in thine only-begotten, Son. — Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTIETH

WE saw yesterday what the object of Malachi was in reminding the Jews that they were loved and chosen by God; it was, that he might the more amplify their ingratitude for having rendered such an unworthy reward for so great a favor of God: as he had preferred them to all other nations, he had justly bound them to perpetual obedience; but they had shaken off the yoke, and having despised God had given themselves up again to many corruptions, as we have yesterday stated. But I reminded you at the same time, that the Prophet refers not here to those benefits with which God favors indiscriminately all mankind, but brings forward the adoption by which he had set apart the seed of Abraham as his peculiar people.

But that it may appear more fully how just this expostulation was, let us first observe, that it is one kind of obligation that God has created us men in his image and after his likeness; for he might have created us dogs and asses, and not men. Adam, we know, was taken from the earth, as other animals were: then as to the body there is no difference between men and other creatures. When it is said that God breathed into man the breath of life, we ought not to dream as the Manicheans do, that man's soul is by traduction; for so they say, affirming that man's soul is from the substance of the Deity; but Moses on the contrary understands that man's soul was created from nothing. We are born by generation, and yet our origin is clay; and the chief thing in us, the soul, is created from nothing. We hence see that we differ from animals because God was pleased to create us men. He therefore will justly charge us with ingratitude, if we do not serve him; for it was for this end he created us in his own image.

But there is here mentioned a special favor — that the Lord took to himself the seed of Abraham, as it is said in the song of Moses, that all nations are God's, but that he had cast his line to set apart Israel for himself.

(^{<053209>}Deuteronomy 32:9.) Though then the whole world was under God's government, it was yet his will to choose one family. If the cause be enquired, it is not to be found in men; for all were created from the earth, and souls were implanted in their bodies created from nothing. Since it was so, we see that the difference arose from the fountain of gratuitous favor — that God preferred one race to the rest; and as we stated yesterday, Moses often repeats this — that the Jews were not chosen because they were

more excellent than other nations, but because God gratuitously loved their fathers. (<050707> Deuteronomy 7:7.) By love he means gratuitous favor.

Malachi then does not consider here that the Jews had been chosen before other nations on the ground of their own merit; for if he granted this, they might have objected and said — “Why dost thou remind us that God has favored us more than other nations, since he deemed us worthy, and rewarded our merit?” But the Prophet takes it as admitted, according to what I have already said, that the Jews were by nature like other nations, so that their different condition did not proceed from themselves, or from their own worthiness, but from the gratuitous love of God.

A third step is also to be noticed here; for God selected a part only from the very race of Abraham, as Esau and Jacob were brothers, and Esau was first according to the order of nature, for he was the first-born; and yet God rejected him, and appointed the favor of election to be in the posterity of Jacob. This third step then was election.

These things ought to be carefully considered. Men are peculiarly bound to God, because he might have created them asses and dogs, and not men; but it has pleased him to form them in his own image. The second step is, that he chose the race of Abraham, when his empire extended over all nations without exception: for how was it that God chose to be the father and savior of one people only, when the whole world was under his authority? Here shines forth, as I have already said, his gratuitous favor; and in addition to the testimonies of Moses, it is often said in the Psalms that God loved the fathers, that he did to them what he had not done to other nations, that he made known his judgments to them. (<19E719> Psalm 147:19.) There are many passages in which God commemorates his favor to the Jews, because it pleased him to distinguish them from other nations, while yet the condition of all by nature was wholly the same. Now the third step which Malachi mentions ought to be carefully noticed — that God not only promised to be a God to Abraham and to his seed, but also made a difference between the very sons of Abraham, so as to reject some and to choose others; and it is on this point that Paul dwells in the ninth chapter to the Romans; <450901> Romans 9:1-33 for he says, that not all who are of Israel—that is, who derive their origin from him — are true and legitimate Israelites, but those who are called. For it was Paul’s object to refute the Jews, for they boasted that they were a holy people, though

they wilfully rejected Christ and his gospel. For when the apostles proved that the Redeemer promised had been sent, the proud answer in the mouth of the Jews was this — “Are not we the Church of God? but we do not acknowledge this Christ whom ye would thrust upon us.” As then the Jews, through this false pretense, despised the favor of God, and sought to trample Christ as it were under foot, Paul repels this arrogance, and shows that they excelled not the nations, except by virtue of a gratuitous adoption, and that this adoption was to be so extended to the whole race of Abraham as yet to be confined to a certain number.

In the same manner do the Papists act in the present day. As they estimate faith by external tokens, they haughtily object to us, and say that they are the Church; as though a general promise were sufficient without the Spirit, who is justly called the Spirit of adoption, by whom God seals it within, even in our hearts.

Now Paul adds evidences of the fact, and brings forward the instance of Jacob and Esau. Of the twin brothers, one, he says, was chosen, and the other passed by; and yet both were the sons of Abraham. It then follows that there is a third step in election, as I have already stated. Now from this third proceeds a fourth — that God takes some of the sons of Jacob, whom he has chosen before the foundation of the world, and others he rejects; and of this fact Paul adduces a sure proof, or assigns an evident reason: God preferred Jacob to his brother, the first-born, but not on account of any merit: if then the free mercy of God availed so much in the election of Jacob, it follows that the same still prevails with regard to his posterity. If it be again asked, whence comes it that some are faithful and others are reprobate, the answer is, because it so pleases God. Hence Paul ascends higher and says, that before they were born, and had done neither good nor evil, it was said, the elder shall serve the younger; and then he brings forward this prophecy—Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

If then we wisely consider the whole passage, we shall find what I have stated — that from the third step we may proceed to a fourth, and that is, that from the sons of Jacob God chose whom he pleased and rejected others; for when he chose Jacob, God was not bound to him any more than he was before. The same promise was indeed repeated to Jacob, which had been given to Abraham; but from Abraham proceeded Ishmael, who was rejected, we know, from God’s Church; and the same was the case with the

other sons of Abraham. Isaac was alone chosen. But Isaac, the father of Esau and Jacob, was not able at his own pleasure to retain them both; but here the free and hidden election of God appeared, so that Esau was rejected, and Jacob remained as the legitimate heir to the divine favor.

We now then more fully understand what the Prophet means: he does not charge the Jews with having shaken off every fear of that God, in whose image they had been created; but he enhances their ingratitude, because they gave no response to the free adoption of God, for they had been chosen from all other nations, and not only this, but they had been separated again from the very race of Abraham, and this was their second election. Another thing must also be added respecting their gratuitous election; for the reproof of the Prophet would not have been received, except God in his adoption had regard only to his own favor; for if we grant that either Jacob or Abraham had merited anything, what the Prophet says, *Was not Esau Jacob's brother?* would not have availed. An answer might have been readily given, "He was indeed his brother, but his virtue being meritorious set him before his brother." But the Prophet here presses this point on the Jews — that having been bound by so many benefits, they yet were become as it were spurious; for they had degenerated from the favor which God had conferred on them. We hence see that by these words of the Prophet it is sufficiently proved — that Abraham had been chosen by God in preference to all other nations, Isaac in preference to his brother Ishmael, and Jacob in preference to Esau.

And Scripture is full of proofs on the subject, and experience also sufficiently demonstrates the truth. Moses says, that it was not by their own virtue that they excelled other nations, for they were a rebellious and a stiff-necked people. Though God then knew the perverse character of that nation, it yet pleased him to make them an example of his wonderful goodness. There is therefore no reason for us to seek any other cause for adoption except the will of God. And since the election of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was gratuitous, it follows that each one is freely chosen whom God separates from the whole body; and thus we come to the fourth step; for what is said here, that Jacob was chosen, ought not to be confined to his person, but what he had in common with his posterity. Jacob then was chosen — for what purpose? that his children might be God's holy and peculiar people. Now if we consider his whole offspring, we shall find that all who descended from Jacob were not legitimate Israelites, for the greatest

part of them were rejected. As then many who derived their origin from Jacob, were not less reprobate than Esau, it follows that God's free favor and gratuitous mercy prevails as to individuals: and this is the subject which Paul discusses in the ninth chapter to the Romans.

It seems hard to many, that God should choose some and not all, and that he should regard no worthiness, but of his own free will choose whom he pleases, and reject others. But whence comes this objection, except that they wish to restrain God and subject him to their own judgment? But we must come to the principle to which I have referred. If it seems unreasonable to them that one of two should be chosen and the other rejected, how can they defend the justice of God (if need there be of their apology) with regard to an ass and man? for as I have said, they both proceeded, both asses and men, from the same lump as to their bodies. Every vigor and strength in the ass has been created by the hidden power of God: and as to the soul of man, though its essence is immortal, it has yet been created from nothing. Now, then, let these wise censors answer for God in this case, whom they think to be exposed to many calumnies, when we say that men's salvation depends on his will, so that he rejects some and chooses others.

But as to general election, there is the same difficulty to satisfy the judgment of men: for as we have already said, there is no difference between men but what arises from hidden election. They indeed imagine in this case a foreknowledge as the mother of election: but the notion is extremely foolish and puerile. They then say, that some are elected by God and some are rejected, because God, to whom nothing is hid, foresees what every one will be. But I now ask, Whence is it that one is virtuous, while another is vicious? If they say, from free-will, doubtless creation is anterior to free-will: this is one thing. Then we know that in Adam all men were created alike; for how is it that we are all exposed to eternal death, and that the vengeance of God extends over us all, and at this day prevails through the whole world? How is this, except that the condition of us all originally is one and the same? It follows then, that if Adam stood upright, all men would be alike in their integrity. I do not now speak of special gifts: for there would have been, I allow, a difference of endowments had nature remained perfect; but as to eternal life the condition of all would have been the same. Now after the fall of Adam we are all lost. What can then be more foolish and absurd than to imagine that there is some virtue in man by

which he excels others, since we are all equally accursed in the person of Adam? For who hath made thee to excel, saith Paul? He proves that there is no excellency in man, except what proceeds from the bounty of God only, and as I have stated, the reason is quite manifest.

For either original sin does not belong to all men, or God cannot foresee that this man will be just and that man unjust. Why? All are naturally reprobate in Adam and liable to eternal death, and the reason is evident, for nothing is found in men but sin. The foreknowledge of God then cannot be the cause of our election, for by looking on the whole race of man, he finds them all under a curse from the least to the greatest.

We see then how foolishly do they talk and prattle who ascribe to mere and naked prescience what ought to be ascribed to the good pleasure of God. That God made himself known to the race of Abraham, that he designed to deposit his law with the Israelites — all this was his peculiar favor, and no other reason can be assigned for it except gratuitous adoption. God then favored the children of Abraham with this privilege, because it so pleased him: for if we say that they were worthy, and by their virtue rendered themselves deserving, the Holy Spirit does in the first place everywhere speak against us, and in the second place experience and facts, for the obstinacy of that people was extraordinary. But we ought to be satisfied with the authority of Scripture, since God makes known and illustrates his favor by this instance — that he loved Abraham and his children, that is, that he was favorable to the Jews through his own goodness only, and this is what we shall hereafter see still more clearly. Let this then remain as a fixed principle — that the cause of our election is nothing else but the mere favor of God. If we seek a cause apart from God, when we enquire about our election, we shall wander in a labyrinth.

That the same principle holds as to individuals, I have already proved. It ought indeed to be sufficient for us, that Paul passes from the person of Jacob to individuals among his posterity. For he adduces as it were an instance in the two brothers, in order to convince us that no one is chosen on account of his own virtue, but according to the good pleasure of God: nor was it necessary to state these circumstances — that one was chosen when the brothers were not yet born, and when they had not done either good or evils that it was not through works but through him who called, except he meant to prove this, that it is in God's power to choose whom

he wills and to reject whom he wills. But as Augustine reminds us, nothing can be imagined more absurd than that notion, with which many are pleased, that God has foreknown what men will be, for Paul excludes such foreknowledge as the cause which he infers, that it was not owing to works but to him who called, that God preferred the one to the other, for neither of them, while in their mother's womb, had done either good or evil.

Paul brings also a confirmation from another declaration of Moses, "I will pity whom I will pity, and mercy will I show to whom I will be merciful." "By these words God clearly declares that it was in his power to reject whom he pleased of the seed of Jacob, and to choose whom he pleased. What then he had before said respecting one man, God now applies to the whole seed, for he speaks not there of foreign nations, but of that holy and chosen people. When God threatened with ruin all the children of Abraham, Moses humbly deprecated this, lest he should annul his own covenant: God answered him, "I will pity whom I will pity," — what does this mean? that there is no other cause why God retains some for himself and rejects others, than his own will. The repetition may seem superfluous and frigid, "I will pity whom I will pity," but it is very emphatical; as though he had said, "I might have chosen for myself another from the world and not Abraham, but I have according to my own good pleasure adopted him; and Ishmael might have been as dear to me as Isaac, but it has been my will that the blessing should rest on Isaac; when he also had begotten two children, I repudiated the first born and choose Jacob, and now from the posterity of Jacob I will choose for myself whom I please, for there is to be found no other cause but my will, 'I will then pity whom I will pity, and mercy will I show to whom I will be merciful.'" If then in this case men will contend with God, and would know why he chooses this rather than that man, the answer he gives is, that the cause is to be found in his mercy alone, for he is bound to no one.

We now see how the folly of those vanishes away who would have foreknowledge to be the cause of election; and also that they who murmur against God, are sufficiently refuted by this reason, that it is in his power either to choose or to reject, inasmuch as he is under obligations to none.

As to reprobation, the cause of it is sufficiently manifest in the fall of Adam, for, as we have said, we all fell with him. It must still be observed, that the election of God is anterior to Adam's fall; and that hence all we

who are rescued from the common ruin have been chosen in Christ before the creation of the world, but that others justly perish though they had not been lost in Adam; because God appointed Christ the head of his Church, in order that we might be saved in him, not all, but those who have been chosen.

And with regard to the proof, it is not necessary here to bring together the mass of passages found in scripture, for this would be endless. But there are, however, some remarkable passages, by which it is sufficiently evident that some are chosen from the whole world as well as from the race of Abraham, according to God's good pleasure only, and that others are rejected, and that there is no other cause to be found but his will; for our election is hid in the eternal and secret counsel of God, and founded on Christ, and reprobation is also hid in the judgment of God. Now if we wish to penetrate into this mystery, we must know that it is a great and unfathomable abyss: here all our ideas vanish away. In the meantime, however, God does not lose his liberty to choose and reject whom he pleases.

With regard to election, the ninth chapter to the Romans (<450901> Romans 9:1) ought to be sufficient, or rather the three chapters, for Paul pursues the same argument to the end of the eleventh chapter, and then exclaims that the riches of God's wisdom and goodness are incomprehensible, and that his judgments are untraceable. He speaks also of the elect in the first chapter to the Ephesians; <490101> Ephesians 1:1 and the sum of what he says is, that all the faithful had been chosen in Christ before the creation of the world, and through the good pleasure of God only, in order that he might show in them the glory of his goodness.

By no refinements can they escape who attempt to darken this truth; for Paul very clearly and briefly declares that the whole world has not been chosen, but the faithful, who are afterwards favored with the Spirit of adoption: and thus sufficiently is that fancy refuted, that the election of God ought to be connected with his promises. I wonder that men of learning, endued with judgment and versed in scripture, so frigidly pass over the subject, and that they are not at least moved when they see that they give to many the occasion of foolishly going astray, and that some take hence the opportunity to calumniate. We must, however, declare what this passage requires — that those are very unwise who seek to subvert or

overthrow the eternal election of God by this contrivance — that God addresses all men generally, “Come unto me” — “I am your Father.” Since God then offers his grace to all by the external preaching of his word, they will have it that all are elected: but Paul says, that we are believers, because we have been elected. If then it be asked, why some obstinately reject the grace of God, and others embrace it in the spirit of meekness, Paul assigns the reason, and it is this — because God illuminates those who believe, inasmuch as he has chosen them before the creation of the world. It then follows that God so speaks generally, as that the efficacy of the doctrine still depends on his secret good pleasure; for whence is faith, but from his peculiar favor? and why does he not communicate his grace to all? even because he has not chosen all. We see that Paul thus proceeds step by step, that he might teach us that faith emanates from the fountain of free election; and he raises up election into the highest eminence to show that it is not right to inquire into its cause. Thus much about election.

As to reprobation, I know that many greatly dislike this doctrine — that some are rejected, and that yet no cause can be found in themselves why they thus remain disapproved by God. But there is here need of docility and of a meek spirit, to which Paul also exhorts us, when he says,

“O man, who art thou who answerest against God?”

(^{<450920>}Romans 9:20.)

For were it lawful to investigate the cause, surely Paul, who had been taken up to the third heaven, might have showed us the way; but he is here silent and drives us away from the indulgence of a bold and an over curious spirit. Since the Holy Spirit by the mouth of Paul restrains the presumption of men, that they may not dare to go beyond this step — that God hardens whom he wills and rejects whom he wills, why do men leap beyond this, except they wilfully seek to carry on war with God? and yet they pretend modesty, and under this pretext they seek to bury the doctrine of election; we ought, they say, to speak soberly of mysteries. This last sentence I allow fully; but what is our sobriety but our docility? that is, when we embrace what God declares in his word, and never allow ourselves to investigate more than what he teaches us. But they would extinguish God’s word; nay, they dare openly to pronounce blasphemies against God, and to find fault with the Spirit, who has spoken by the prophets and the apostles.

We indeed see that there are many devils who preach modesty, when their object is to suppress the light and this chief doctrine, the main basis of our salvation; and they extort wicked edicts from the ignorant and the slumbering, as though it were in the power of men, by babbling about things unknown, and by barbarously mixing all things together, to thrust God as it were from his celestial throne. This is horribly monstrous, and ought to be detested by all; for it would be better that all the empires of the world should be swallowed up in the lowest depths, than that mortal creatures should raise themselves up as it were into heaven, and attempt to penetrate into the secret things of God. But, however, when the whole world either assail this doctrine by barking, or seek to subvert it by threats and terrors, or when all in various ways manifest their rage, and when they roll thunders who seem to themselves to be very powerful, it behoves us to hold fast this doctrine, that God alone is the author of our salvation, because he has been pleased freely to elect us, and also that he possesses power over all the human race, so that some, according to his will, are elected and some are rejected, and that he ever acts justly, and holds secret the cause both of election and of reprobation. But it is no wonder that we are so blind, for we are stupid by nature, nay, blind altogether; and were we angels, it would be still our duty reverently to regard the manifold wisdom of God, which no human minds, no, not even angelic minds, can fully comprehend. Other things we must defer.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou best been pleased to adopt us as thy people for this end, that we may be ingrafted as it were into the body of thy Son, and be made conformable to our head, — O grant, that through our whole life we may strive to seal in our hearts the faith of our election, that we may be the more stimulated to render thee true obedience, and that thy glory may also be made known through us; and those whom thou hast chosen together with us may we labor to bring together, that we may unanimously celebrate thee as the Author of our salvation, and so ascribe to thee the glory of thy goodness, that having cast away and renounced all confidence in our own virtue, we may be led to Christ only as the fountain of thy election, in whom also is set before us the certainty of our salvation through thy gospel, until we shall at length be

gathered into that eternal glory which He has proctored for us by his own blood. — Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIRST

<390106> MALACHI 1:6-8

<p>6. A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?</p>	<p>6. Filius honorat patrem, et servus dominum suum; et si pater ego, ubi honor meus? et si dominus ego, ubi timor mei? dicit Iehova exercituum ad vos, O sacerdotes, qui contemnitis nomen meum: et dixistis, In quo contempsimus nomen tuum?</p>
<p>7. Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible.</p>	<p>7. Qui offertis super altare meum panem pollutum; et dixistis, In quo polluimus te? Quum dicitis, Mensa Iehovae ipsa est contemptibilis (vel, despecta.)</p>
<p>8. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts.</p>	<p>8. Si obtuleritis caecum ad immolandum, non malum est? et si claudum vel mutilum obtuleritis, non malum est? Offer hoc nunc (vel, adedum, vel, quaeso; [S]) dubiae est significationis, offer ergo, obsecro, hoc) praefecto tuo, an complacebit ei in te, vel suscipiet faciem tuam, dicit Iehova exercituum?</p>

GOD as already proved that he had by many favors been a Father to the Jews. They must have felt that he had indeed bound them to himself, provided they possessed any religion or gratitude. He now then concludes his address to them, as though he had said, that he had very ill bestowed all the blessings he had given them; and he adopts two similitudes; he first compares himself to a father, and then to a master. He says, that in these two respects he had a just cause to complain of the Jews; for he had been a father to them, but they did not in their turn conduct themselves as children, in a submissive and obedient manner, as they ought to have done.

And farther, he became their master, but they shook off the yoke, and allowed not themselves to be ruled by his authority.

As to the word, Father, we have already shown that the Jews were not only in common with others the children of God, but had been also chosen as his peculiar people. Their adoption then made them God's children above all other nations; for when they differed nothing from the rest of the world, God adopted them. With regard to the right and power of a master, God, in the first place, held them bound to him as the Creator and former of the whole world; but he also, as it is well known, attained the right by redemption. That he might then enhance their crime, he not only expostulates with them for having abused his favors, but he charges them also with obstinacy, because they disobeyed his authority, while yet he was their Lord.

He says, that a *son who honors his father, and a servant his master*. He applies the same verb to both clauses; but he afterwards makes a difference, ascribing honor to a father and fear to a master. As to the first clause, we know that whenever there is authority, there ought to be honor; and when masters are over servants, they ought to be honored. But in a subsequent clause he speaks more distinctly, and says, that a master ought to be feared by a servant, while honor is due to a father from a son. For servants do not love their masters; not being able to escape from their power, they fear them: but the reverence which sons have for their fathers, is more generous and more voluntary. But God shows here, that the Jews could by no means be kept to their duty, though so many favors ought to have made it their sweet delight. God had indeed conciliated them as much as possible to himself, but all was without any benefit. The majesty also of God ought to have struck them with fear. It was then the same, as though he had said, that they were of so perverse a nature, that they could not be led to obedience either by a kind and gracious invitation, or by an authoritative command.

The Lord then complains that he was deprived by the Jews of the honor which sons owe to their fathers, as well as of the fear which servants ought to have for their masters; and thus he shows that they were like untameable wild beasts, which cannot be tamed by any kind treatment, nor subdued by scourges, or by any kind of castigation.

He then adds, *To you, O priests*. It is certain that this complaint ought not to be confined to the priests alone, since God, as we have seen, speaks generally of the whole race of Abraham: for he had said that Levi was advanced to the sacerdotal honor, while the other brethren were passed by; but he had said also, that Jacob was chosen when Esau was rejected; and this belonged in common to the twelve tribes. Now it ought not, and it could not, be confined to the tribe of Levi, that God was their father or their master. Why then does he now expressly address the priests? They ought indeed to have been leaders and teachers to the rest of the people, but he does not on this account exempt the whole people from blame or guilt, though he directs his discourse to the priests; for his object was to show that all things had become so corrupt among the people, that the priests were become as it were the chief in contempt of religion and in sacrileges, and in every kind of pollution. It hence follows that there was nothing sound and right in the community; for when the eyes themselves are without light, they cannot discharge their duty to the body, and what at length will follow?

God then no doubt shows that great corruptions prevailed and had spread so much among the people, that they who ought to have been examples to others, had especially shaken off the yoke and given way to unbridled licentiousness. This then is the reason why the Prophet condemns the priests, though at the beginning he included the whole people, as it is evident from the context.

We must at the same time bear in mind what we have elsewhere said -that the fault of the people was not lessened because the sin of the priest was the most grievous; but that all were involved in the same ruin; for God in this case did not absolve the common people, inasmuch as they were guilty of the same sins; but he shows that the most grievous fault belonged to the teachers, who had not reprov'd the people, but on the contrary increased licentiousness by their dissimulation, as we shall presently find again.

He says that they *despised his name*; not that the fear of God prevailed in others, but that it was the duty of the priests to reprove the impiety of the whole people. As then they allowed to others so much liberty, it appeared quite evident that the name of God was but little esteemed by them; for had they possessed true zeal, they would not have suffered the worship of

God to be trodden under foot or profaned, as we shall presently find to have been the case.

It then follows, *Ye have said, In what have we despised thy name?* As the Prophet at the beginning indirectly touched on the hypocrisy and perverseness of the people, so he now no doubt repeats the same thing by using a similar language: for how was it that the priests as well as the people asked a question on a plain matter, as though it were obscure, except that they were blind to their own vices? Now the cause of blindness is hypocrisy, and then, as it is wont to do, it brings with it perverseness; for all who deceive themselves, dare even to raise their horns against God, and petulantly to clamor that he too severely treats them; for the Prophet doubtless does not here relate their words, except for the purpose of showing that they had such a brazen front and so hard a neck, that they boldly repelled all reproofs. We see at this day in the world the same sottishness; for though the crimes reprov'd are sufficiently known, yet they, even the most wicked, immediately object and say that wrong is done to them; and they will not acknowledge a fault except they be a hundred times convicted, and even then they will make some pretense. And truly were there not daily proofs to teach us how refractory men are towards God, the thing would be incredible. The Prophet then did no doubt by this cutting expression goad and also wound the people as well as the priests, intimating that so gross was their hypocrisy, that they dared to make shifts, when their crimes were openly known to all.

Ye have said then, by what have we despised thy name? They inquired as though they had rubbed their forehead, and then gained boldness, “What does this mean? for thou accuses us here of being wicked and sacrilegious, but we are not conscious of any wrong.” Then the answer is given in God’s name, *Ye offer on mine altar polluted bread.* A question may be here asked, “Ought this to have been imputed to the priests as a crime; for had victims been offered, such as God in his law commanded, it would have been to the advantage and benefit of the priests; and had fine corn been brought, it would have been advantageous to the priests?” But it seems to me probable, that the priests are condemned because like hungry and famished men they seized indiscriminately on all things around them. Some think that the priests grossly and fraudulently violated the law by changing the victims — that when a fat ram was offered, the priests, as they suppose, took it away, and put in its place a ram that was lean, or lame, or

mutilated. But this view appears not to me suitable to the passage. Let us then regard the meaning to be what I have stated — that God here contends with the whole people, but that he directs his reproofs to the priests, because they were in two ways guilty, for they formed a part of the people, and they also suffered God to be dishonored; for what could have been more disgraceful than to offer polluted victims and polluted bread?

If it be now asked, whether this ought to have been ascribed as a fault to the priests, the answer is this — that the people then were not very wealthy; for they had but lately returned from exile, and they had not brought with them much wealth, and the land was desolate and uncultivated: as, then, there was so much want among the people, and they were intent, each on his advantage, according to what we have seen in the Prophet Haggai, (^{<370104>}Haggai 1:4,) and neglected the temple of God and their sacrifices, there is no doubt but that they wished anyhow to discharge their duty towards God, and therefore brought beasts which were either lame or blind; and hence the whole worship of God was vitiated, their sacrifices being polluted. The priests ought to have rejected all these, and to have closed up God's temple, rather than to have received indiscriminately what God had prohibited. As then this indifference of the people was nothing but a profanation of divine worship, the priests ought to have firmly opposed it. But as they themselves were hungry, they thought it better to lay hold on everything around them — “What,” they said, “will become of us? for if we reject these sacrifices, however vicious they may be, they will offer nothing; and thus we shall starve, and there will be no advantage; and we shall be forced in this case to open and to close the temple, and to offer sacrifices at our own expense, and we are not equal to this burden.” Since then the priests spared the people for private gain, our Prophet justly reproves them, and says, *ye offer polluted bread.*

It was indeed the office of the priests to place bread daily on the table; but whence could bread be obtained except some were offered? Now nothing was lost to the priests, when they daily set bread before God, for they presently received it; and thus they preferred, as it was more to their advantage, to offer bread well approved, made of fine flour: but as I have said, their own convenience interposed, for they thought that they could not prevail with the people — “If we irritate these men, they will deny that they have anything to offer; and thus the temple will be empty, and our own houses will be empty; it is then better to take coarse bread from

them than nothing; we shall at least feed our families and servants with this bread, after having offered it to the Lord.” We hence see how the fault belonged to the priests, when the people offered polluted bread, and unapproved victims.

I have hitherto explained the Prophet’s words with reference chiefly to the shew-bread; not that they ought to be so strictly taken as many interpreters have considered them; for under the name of bread is included, we know, every kind of eatables; so it seems probable to me that the word ought to be extended to all the sacrifices; but one kind is here mentioned as an example; and it seems also that what immediately follows is added as an explanation — *ye offer the lame and the blind and the mutilated*. Since these things are connected together, I have no doubt but that God means by bread here every kind of offering, and we know that the shew-bread was not offered on the altar; but there was a table by itself appointed for this purpose near the altar. And why God designates by bread all the sacrifices may be easily explained; for God would have sacrifices offered to him as though he had his habitation and table among the Jews; it was not indeed his purpose to fill their minds with gross imaginations, as though he did eat or drink, as we know that heathens have been deluded with such notions; but his design was only to remind the Jews of that domestic habitation which he had chosen for himself among them. But more on this subject shall presently be said; I shall now proceed to consider the words.

Ye offer on my altar polluted bread; and ye have said, *In what have we polluted thee?* The priests again answer as though God unjustly accused them; for they allege their innocency, as the question is to be regarded here as a denial: *In what* then *have we polluted thee?* They deny that they were rightly condemned, inasmuch as they had duly served God. But we may hence conclude, according to what has been before stated, that the people were under the influence of gross hypocrisy, and had become hardened in their obstinacy. It is the same at this day; though there be such a mass of crimes, which everywhere prevails in the world, and even overflows the earth, yet no one will bear to be condemned; for every one looks on others, and thus when no less grievous sins appear in others, every one absolves himself. This is then the sottishness which the Prophet again goads — *Ye have said, In what have we polluted thee?* He and other Prophets no doubt charged the Jews with this sacrilege — that they polluted the name of God.

But it deserves to be known, that few think that they pollute God and his name when they worship him superstitiously or formally, as though they had to do with a child: but we see that God himself declares, that the whole of religion is profaned, and that his name is shamefully polluted when men thus trifle with him.

He answers, *when ye said*, literally, in your saying, *The table of Jehovah, it is contemptible*. Here the Prophet discovers the fountain of their sin; and he shows as it were by the finger, that they had despised those rites which belonged to the worship of God. The reason follows, *If ye offer the blind, he says, for sacrifice, it is no evil*. Some read the last clause as a question, “is it not evil?” but he, the mark of a question, is not here; and we may easily gather from the context that the Prophet as yet relates how presumptuously both the priests and the whole people thought they could be acquitted and obtain pardon for themselves, “It is no evil thing if the lame be offered, if the blind be offered, if the maimed be offered; there is nothing evil in all this.”^{f3} We now then understand what the Prophet means.

But the subject would have been obscure had not a fuller explanation been given in these words, *The table of Jehovah, it is contemptible*.^{f4} God does here show, as I have before stated, why he was so much displeased with the Jews. Nothing is indeed so precious as his worship; and he had instituted under the law sacrifices and other rites, that the children of Abraham might exercise themselves in worshipping him spiritually. It was then the same as though he had said, that he cared nothing for sheep and calves, and for any thing of that kind, but that their impiety was sufficiently manifested, inasmuch as they did not think that the whole of religion was despised when they despised the external acts of worship according to the law. God then brings back the attention of the Jews from brute animals to himself, as though he had said, “Ye offer to me lame and blind animals, which I have forbidden to be offered; that you act unfaithfully towards me is sufficiently apparent; and if ye say that these are small things and of no moment, I answer, that you ought to have regarded the end for which I designed that sacrifices should be offered to me, and ordered bread to be laid on my table in the sanctuary; for by these tokens you ought to have known that I live in the midst of you, and that whatever ye eat or drink is sacred to me, and that all you possess comes to you through my bounty. As then this end for which sacrifices have been

appointed has been neglected by you, it is quite evident that ye have no care nor concern for true religion.

We now then perceive why the Prophet objects to the priests, that they had called the table of Jehovah contemptible; not that they had spoken thus expressly, but because they had regarded it almost as nothing to pervert and adulterate the whole of divine worship according to the law, which was an evidence of religion when there was any.

Now it may seem strange, that God one while so strictly requires pure sacrifices and urges the observance of them, when yet at another time he says that he does not seek sacrifices, “Sacrifice I desire not, but mercy,” (<280606> Hosea 6:6;) and again, “Have I commanded your fathers when I delivered them from Egypt, to offer victims to me? With this alone was I content, that they should obey my voice.” He says afterwards in Micah,

“Shall I be propitious to you if ye offer me all your flocks? but rather, O man, humble thyself before thy God.”

(<330606> Micah 6:6.)

The same is said in the fiftieth Psalm, in the first and the last chapters of Isaiah, and in many other places. Since then God elsewhere depreciates sacrifices, and shows that they are not so highly esteemed by him, why does he now so rigidly expostulate with the Jews, because they offered lame and maimed animals? I answer, that there was a reason why God should by this reproof discover the impiety of the people. Had all their victims been fat or well fed, our Prophet would have spoken as we find that others have done; but since their faithlessness had gone so far that they showed even to children that they had no regard for the worship of God — since they had advanced so far in shamelessness, it was necessary that they should be thus convicted of impiety; and hence he says, *ye offer to me polluted bread*, as though he had said, “I supply you with food, it was your duty to offer to me the first-fruits, the tenths, and the shew-bread; and the design of these external performances is, that they may regard themselves as fed by me daily, and also that they may feed moderately and temperately on the bread and flesh and other things given them, as though they were sitting at my table: for when they see that bread made from the same corn is before the presence of God, this ought to come to their minds, ‘it is God’s will, as though he lived with us, that a portion of the same bread should ever be set on the holy table:’ and then when

they offer victims, they are not only to be thus stirred up to repentance and faith, but they ought also to acknowledge that all these are sacred to God, for when they set before the altar either a calf, or an ox, or a lamb, and then see the animal sacrificed, (a part of which remains for the priests,) and the altar sprinkled with blood, they ought to think thus within themselves, ‘Behold, we have all these things in common with God, as though clothed in a human form he dwelt with us and took the same food and the same drink.’ They ought then to have performed in this manner their outward rites.”

God now justly complains, that his table was contemptible, as though he had said, that his favor was rejected, because the people, as it were in contempt, brought coarse bread, as though they wished to feed some swineherd, — a conduct similar to that mentioned in Zechariah, when God said, that a reward was offered for him as though he were some worthless hireling, (^{<380212>}Zechariah 2:12) — “I have carefully fed you,” he says,” and I now demand my reward: ye give for me thirty silverings, a mean and disgraceful price.” So also in this place, *Ye have said, the table of Jehovah,* it is polluted. There is an emphasis in the pronoun; for God shows that he by no means deserved such a reproach: “Who am I, that ye should thus despise my table? I have consecrated it, that ye might have a near access to me, as though I dwelt in the visible sanctuary; but ye have despised my table as though I were nothing.”

He afterwards adds, *Offer this now to thy governor; will he be pleased with thee?* God here complains that less honor is given to him than to mortals; for he adduces this comparison, “When any one owes a tribute or tax to a governor, and brings any thing maimed or defective, he will not receive it.” Hence he draws this inference, that he was extremely insulted, for the Jews dared to offer him what every mortal would reject. He thus reasons from the less to the greater, that this was not a sacrilege that could be borne, as the Jews had so presumptuously abused his kindness; and hence he subjoins

<390109> MALACHI 1:9

9. And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the Lord of hosts.

9. Et nunc deprecamini quaeso faciem Dei, et miserabitur nostri; (e manu vestra factum est hoc;) an suscipiet ex vobis faciem, dicit Iehova exercituum.

He wounds here the priests more grievously, — because they had so degenerated as to be wholly unworthy of their honorable office and title; “Go,” he says, “and *entreat the face of God.*” All this is ironical; for interpreters are much mistaken who think that the Prophet here exhorts the priests humbly to ask pardon from God, both for themselves and for the people. On the contrary, he addresses them, as I have said, ironically, while telling them to be intercessors and mediators between God and the people; and yet they were profane men, who on their part polluted the whole worship of God, and thus subverted the whole of religion: go thou and *entreat*, he says, *the face of God*. This duty, we know, was enjoined on the priests; they were to draw nigh to the sanctuary and present themselves before God as though they were advocates pleading the cause of the people, or at least intercessors to pacify God. Since then they were in this respect the types of Christ, it behoved them to strive themselves to be holy; and though the people abandoned themselves to all kinds of wickedness, it yet became the priests to devote themselves with all reverence to the duties of their calling; and as God had preferred them to their brethren, they ought especially to have consecrated themselves to him with all fear; for the more excellent their condition was, the more eminent ought to have been their piety and holiness. Justly then does the Prophet here inveigh so severely against them, because they did not consider that they were honored with the priesthood, that they might entreat God, and thus pacify his wrath, and reconcile to him miserable men: Go, he says, and *entreat the face of God*; forsooth! *he will accept your face*. We now understand the real meaning of the Prophet.

And now, he says, *he will have mercy on us*. Here also the Prophet derides them, because they boasted that they could prevail through their own high dignity to render God propitious; forsooth! he says, *he will have mercy on us*. But *this is done by your hand*, i.e., *by you*. “Do ye raise up your hands

to God? and will he on seeing you be pacified towards you? As then ye are polluted, ye are unworthy of the honor and office, in which ye so proudly glory.”

He does not however, as we have already said, extenuate the fault of the people, and much less does he exempt them from guilt who were implicated in the same crimes; but he shows that the state of things was wholly desperate; for the common people disregarded God, and the priests, neglecting to make any distinctions, received every sort of victims, only that they might not be in want: he shows them that the state of the people was extremely bad, as there was no one who could, according to what his office required, pacify God. *Will he then receive your face?* The Prophet seems to allude to the person of the Mediator; for as Christ had not as yet appeared, when the priest presented himself before the altar, it was the same as though God looked on the face of one, and became thus propitious to all. On this account he says, that the priests were not worthy that God should look on them, since they had polluted his sanctuary and corrupted his whole service.^{f5} For the same purpose he subjoins —

<390110> **MALACHI 1:10**

10. Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for naught? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

10. Quis etiam in vobis qui claudit ostia, et non incenditis altare meum gratis? non mihi placet in vobis, dicit Iehova exercituum; et oblationem non habebō gratam e manu vestra.

He goes on with the same subject, — that the priests conducted themselves very shamefully in their office, and that the people had become hardened through their example, so that the whole of religion was disregarded. Hence he says, that the *doors* were not closed by them. Some interpreters connect the two things together — that they closed not the doors of the temple, nor kindled the altar for nothing; and thus they apply the adverb, **כֵּן**, *chenam*, to both clauses; as though he had said, that they were hirelings, who did not freely devote themselves to serve God, but looked for profit and gain in everything: and this is the commonly received

explanation.^{f6} But it seems better to me to take them separately and to say, Who does even shut the doors? not however for nothing, and the copulative, ו, *vau*, as in many other places, may be rendered *even*: and yet *ye kindle not for nothing my altar*; as though God had said, “I have fixed your works; ye are then to me as hired servants; and now since I have ordered a reward to be given to you whenever ye stand at my altar, why do ye not close my door?” Some render כִּנָּם, *chenam*, in vain, and give this explanation “Who closes the doors? then kindle not afterwards in vain my altar;” as though God rejected the whole service, which had been corrupted by the avarice or the sloth of the priests, and by the presumption of the people.

It is indeed certain that it is better to separate the two clauses so that the adverb, כִּנָּם, *chenam*, may be confined to the letter; but there may yet, as I have said, be a two-fold meaning. If we render, כִּנָּם, *chenam*, in vain the import is that the Prophet declares that they labored to no purpose while they thus sacrificed to God contrary to his law for they ought to have attended especially to the rule prescribed to them: as then they despised this, he justly says, “Offer not to me in vain;” and thus the future tense is to be taken for the imperative, as we know is the case sometimes in Hebrew.

But no interpreter seems to have sufficiently considered the reason why the Prophet speaks of not closing the doors of the temple. The priests, we know were set over the temple for this reason — that nothing polluted might be admitted; for there were of the Levites some doorkeepers, and others stood at the entrance; in short, all had their stations: and then when they had brought in the victim it was the office of the priests to examine it and to see that it was such as the law of God required. As then it was their special office to see that nothing polluted should be received into the temple of God, he justly complains here that they indiscriminately received what was faulty and profane: hence he rightly declares (for this seems to me to be the true exposition) “Offer not in vain.” He then draws the conclusion, that the priests lost all their labor in thus sacrificing, because God would not have his name profaned, and justly preferred obedience to all sacrifices. He therefore denies that they did any good in slaying victims, because they ought in the first place to have attended to

this — not to change anything in God's word and not to deviate from it in the least. But I cannot now proceed farther.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou best been pleased in thine infinite mercy not only to choose from among us some to be priests to thee, but also to consecrate us all to thyself in thine only begotten Son, — O grant, that we at this day may purely and sincerely serve thee, and so strive to devote ourselves wholly to thee, that we may be pure and chaste in mind, soul, and body, and that thy glory may so shine forth in all our performances, that thy worship among us may be holy, and pure, and approved by thee, until we shall at length enjoy that glory to which thou invites us by thy gospel, and which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son — Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SECOND

I COULD not yesterday finish the complaint which God made against the priests — that no one of them closed the doors of the temple, so that it might continue pure from all defilements; for as their avarice was insatiable, they indiscriminately admitted all sorts of profanations: hence he comes to this conclusion — “Offer not hereafter in vain;” for by saying, *Kindle not my altar*, he means that they spent their toil to no purpose in offering sacrifices, because God required his worship to be performed according to the prescription of his law. I omit now the two other expositions I mentioned yesterday; for it seems to me that the Prophet meant, that the priests wearied themselves in vain while daily offering victims, because the Lord repudiated their service as impure and vicious.

He now adds, *I am not pleased with you,*^{f7} *and an offering I will not accept from your hand*. In the first clause he says that they were not approved by God, or did not please him; and then he adds, that their offerings were rejected; for where there is no pure heart, there we know all works are impure. For we must remember what Moses says — that Abel pleased God together with his sacrifices, (<010404> Genesis 4:4;) and we have seen in another Prophet, that is Haggai, that what is highly esteemed by men is an abomination to God, when he is not worshipped in sincerity and truth, (<370215> Haggai 2:15). Our Prophet now means the same thing — *I am not pleased with you, and I regard not as acceptable the victims from your hand*. It now follows

<390111> MALACHI 1:11

11. For from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen saith the Lord of hosts.

11. Quia (vel, certe) ab ortu solis usque ad occasum magnum nomen meum inter gentes; et in omni loco suffitus offertur nomini meo, et oblatio munda; quia (vel, certe est eadem particula [] magnum nomen meum inter gentes, dicit Iehova exercituum.

Here God shows that he no longer cared for the Jews, for he would bid altars to be reared for him everywhere and through all parts of the world, that he might be purely worshipped by all nations. It is indeed a remarkable prophecy as to the calling of the Gentiles; but we must especially remember this, — that whenever the Prophets speak of this calling, they promise the spread of God’s worship as a favor to the Jews, or as a punishment and reproach.

The Prophets then promised to the Jews that the Gentiles would become allied to them; so does Zechariah,

“In that day lay hold shall ten men on the skirt of the garment, and will say to a Jew, Be thou our leader; for the same God with thee will we worship.” (^{<380823>}Zechariah 8:23.)

It would have been then the highest honor to the Jews had they become teachers to all nations, so as to instruct them in true religion. So also Isaiah says, that is, that those who were before aliens would become the disciples of the chosen people, so that they would willingly submit to their teaching. But as the Jews have fallen from their place, the Gentiles have succeeded and occupied their position. Hence it is that the Prophets when speaking of the calling of the Gentiles, often denounce it as a punishment on the Jews; as though they had said, that when they were repudiated there would be other children of God, whom he would substitute in their place, according to what Christ threatened to the men of his age,

“Taken away from you shall be the kingdom of God, and shall be given to another nation.” (^{<402143>}Matthew 21:43.)

Such is this prophecy: for our Prophet does not simply open to the Gentiles the temple of God, to connect them with the Jews and to unite them in true religion; but he first excludes the Jews, and shows that the worship of God would be exercised in common by the Gentiles, for the doctrine of salvation would be propagated to the utmost extremities of the earth.

This difference ought to be noticed, which interpreters have not observed, and yet it is what is very necessary to be known; and for want of knowing this has it happened that passages wholly different have been indiscriminately blended together. The Prophet then does not here promise, as we have often stated in other places, that the whole world

would be subject to God, so that true religion would everywhere prevail, but he brands the Jews with reproach, as though he had said, “God has repudiated you, but he will find other sons for himself, who will occupy your place.” He had repudiated in the last verse their sacrifices, and we know how haughtily the Jews gloried in the holiness of their race. As then they were inflated with so much pride, they thought that God would be no God except he had them as his holy Church. The Prophet here answers them, and anticipates their objection by saying, that God’s name would be celebrated through the whole world: “Ye are a few people, all the nations will unite in one body to worship God together; God then will not stand in need of you, and after he rejects you his kingdom will not decay. Ye indeed think that his kingdom cannot be safe, and that his glory will perish except he is worshipped by you; but I now declare to you, that the worship of God will flourish everywhere, even after he shall cast you out of his family.”

We now then see what the Prophet means when he says, that *Great will be the name of God from the rising to the setting of the sun.*^{f8} It is simply said in ^{<19B303>}Psalm 113:3

“From the rising to the setting of the sun wonderful shall be the name of God.”

There indeed it is only a promise, but here the Prophet includes the punishment which the Jews had deserved, as though he had said, that after they were rejected by God on account of their ingratitude, the Gentiles would become holy to God, because he would adopt them instead of that wicked and ungodly people.

But I have said, that the calling of the Gentiles is here clearly proved, or may with certainty be elicited from this prophecy, for this reason, because the name of God cannot be great without the teaching of the truth. It is therefore the same thing as though the Prophet had said, that the law which had been given to the Jews would be proclaimed among all nations, so that true religion might spread everywhere: for the basis of true religion is to know how he is to be worshipped by us, inasmuch as obedience is better than all sacrifices. And it is necessary always to begin with this principle — to know the God whom we worship: and hence Christ himself, in the fourth chapter of John, condemns all the religions which then prevailed in the world, because men presumptuously worshipped gods devised by

themselves. Since then it is necessary that the worship of God should be based on the truth, then God declares that his name would become renowned in every place, he doubtless shows that his law would be known to all nations, so that his will might be known everywhere, which is, as we have said, the only rule of true religion.

He afterwards adds — *Everywhere shall be offered incense to my name, and a clean offering.* Why? Because *my name shall be great.* The repetition is not useless; for it was a thing then incredible, inasmuch as God had not in vain separated the Jews from the rest of the world; nor was it an ordinary commendation, when Moses said in the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy — “Show me a nation to whom God draws nigh as lie does to you: this then is your nobility and your excellency, to have a God nigh and friendly to you.” Hence also it is said in ^{<19E720>}Psalm 147:20 —

“He has not done thus to other nations; his judgments has he not made known to them.”

It was then the peculiar privilege of the race of Abraham that God was known and worshipped by them. The very novelty, then, of what is here said might have closed the door against this prophecy; and this is the reason why the Prophet repeatedly confirms what it was then difficult to believe — *the name of God, he says, shall be great in every place.*

We must also bear in mind that God cannot be rightly worshipped except he is known, which Paul confirms when he says — “How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?” for except the truth shines forth, we shall grope like the blind, and wander through devious ways. There is therefore no religion approved by God except what is based on his word.

Moreover the Prophet, by מנחה, *meneche*, offering, and by incense, means the worship of God; and this mode of speaking is common in the Scriptures, for the Prophets who were under the law accommodated their expressions to the comprehension of the people. Whenever then they intend to show that the whole world would come to the faith and true religion — “An altar,” they say, “shall be built to God;” and by altar they no doubt meant spiritual worship, and not that after Christ’s coming sacrifices ought to be offered. For now there is no altar for us; and whosoever builds an altar for himself subverts the cross of Christ, on which he offered the only true and perpetual sacrifice.

It then follows that this mode of speaking ought to be so taken, that we may understand the analogy between the legal rites, and the spiritual manner of worshipping God now prescribed in the gospel. Though then the words of the Prophet are metaphorical, yet their meaning is plain enough — that God will be worshipped and adored everywhere. But what are the sacrifices of the New Testament? They are prayers and thanksgivings, according to what the Apostle says in the last chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. There was also under the law the spiritual worship of God, as it is especially stated in the fiftieth psalm; but there were then shadows connected with it, as it is intimated in these words of Christ —

“Now is come the hour when the Father shall be worshipped in spirit and in truth.” (<430413> John 4:13.)

He does not indeed deny that God was worshipped in spirit by the fathers; but as that worship was concealed under outward rites, he says that now under the gospel the simple, and, so to speak, the naked truth is taught. What then the Prophet says of offering and incense availed under the law; but we must now see what God commands in his gospel, and how he would have us to worship him. We do not find there any incense or sacrifices.

This passage contains nothing else than that the time would come when the pure and spiritual worship of God would prevail in all places.

And thus it appears how absurd are the Papists, when they hence infer that God cannot be worshipped without some kind of sacrifice; and on this ground they defend the impiety of their mass, as though it were the sacrifice of which the Prophet speaks. But nothing can be more foolish and puerile; for the Prophet, as we have said, adopts a mode of speaking common in Scripture. And were we to allow offering and incense to be taken here literally, how could, מְנַחֵה, *meneche*, offering, be the body and blood of Christ? “Oh!” they say, “it is a sacrifice made of bread, and wine was added. Oh! Christ has thus commanded.” But where has he said “sacrifice?”^{f9} They again deny that it is bread? for they say that it is transubstantiated into the body of Christ: now then it is not a sacrifice of bread, nor of fine flour; for the form only, visible to the eyes, and without substance, remains, as they imagine. There is in the meantime no reason for us carefully to discuss a subject so clear; for as we have seen in Joel —

“In the last days I will pour my Spirit on all flesh, and prophesy shall your sons and your daughters; your old men dreams shall dream, and your young men visions shall see.” (<290228> Joel 2:28.)

So also we find what is similar in this place; for the Apostles, though not taught by visions, were yet we know illuminated; and then visions were not given commonly at the commencement of the gospel, nor dreams; they were indeed very rare things. What then does Paul mean? For he speaks of the whole body of the Church, as though he had said that all, from the least to the greatest, would be Prophets. Did they become Prophets by visions and dreams, whom God illuminated by the doctrine of the gospel? By no means. But Joel, as I have said, accommodated what he said to the time of the law. So also in this place the Prophet, by offering and incense, designates the spiritual worship of God. Let us now proceed-

<390112> **MALACHI 1:12**

12. But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible.

12. Et vos polluistis illud, quum dicitis, Mensa Iehovae polluta est; et proventus ejus (vel, fructus; alii vertunt, sermonem) contemptibilis cibus ejus.

This verse may be confined to the priests, or it may be extended to the whole people; for both views are appropriate. As to my own view, I doubt not but that the Prophet here reproves with additional severity the priests, and that at the same time he extends his reproof to the people in general. We saw in our yesterday's lecture how religion had been polluted by the priests, and how impiously they had profaned the worship of God: but this was the general sin of the whole people, as we shall presently see. Let us then know that the whole people, as well as the priests, are here reproved: but as a crime in the priests was more grievous, they being the occasion of sacrilege to others, the Prophet assails them in an especial manner, *Ye*, he says, *have polluted my name*.

He gives a reason, and at the same time enhances their guilt: for they might have complained, that God not only put them on a level with the Gentiles, but also rejected them, and substituted aliens in their place. He shows that God had a just cause for disinheriting them, and for adopting the Gentiles

as his children, for they had polluted God's name. He at the same time amplifies their sin, when he says, "The Gentiles, by whom I have been hitherto despised, and to whom my name was not made known, will soon come to the faith; thus my name shall be great, it shall be reverently worshipped by all nations; but ye have polluted it." It was certainly very strange, that the Jews, peculiarly chosen and illuminated by the doctrine of the Law, so presumptuously polluted God's worship, as though they despised him, and that the Gentiles, being novices, rendered obedience to God as soon as they tasted of the truth of religion, so that his glory became through them illustrious.

He afterwards shows how the name of Gog was polluted, *Ye say, The table of Jehovah is polluted*; that is, ye distinguish not between what is sacred and profane: for he repeats what we noticed yesterday, — that the Jews thought it a frivolous matter, when the Prophets taught them that God was to be worshipped with all reverence. It is not however probable, that they openly uttered such a blasphemy as that the table of God was polluted; but it is easy to conclude from what is said, that God's table was profaned by them, for they made no account of it. The holiness of the table ought to have been so regarded by the Jews, as not to approach the sanctuary without true repentance and faith; they ought to have known that they had to do with God, and that his majesty ought to have deeply touched them. When therefore they came to the temple, and brought with them their uncleanness like swine, it was quite evident that they had no reverence for the temple, or the altar, or the table. According to this sense then are the words of the Prophet to be understood, — not that the Jews openly mocked God, but that the holiness of the temple was with them of no account.

With regard to the *Table*, we stated yesterday, that when God ordered sacrifices to be offered to him, it was the same as though he familiarly dwelt among the Jews, and became as it were their companion. It was the highest honor and an instance of God's ineffable goodness, that he thus condescended, so that the people might know that he was not to be sought afar off. And for this reason the less excusable was their impiety, as they did not consider that sacrifices were celebrated on earth, that their minds might be raised up above the heavens: for it is to this purpose that God descends to us, even to raise us above, as we have elsewhere stated. It was then an extremely base and shameful senselessness and stupidity in the

Jews, that they did not consider that God's table was set among them, that they might by faith penetrate into heaven, and know it to be even before their eyes.

As to the words, *Its fruit is his contemptible food*, we must observe, that some render, נִב, *nib*, word, and bring this passage from Isaiah, "I have created the fruit of the lips, peace, peace," (<235719> Isaiah 57:19.) The verb, נִב, *nub*, means to fructify; hence, נִב, *nib*, is fruit or produce. Were we to grant that it is metaphorically taken for word, yet I see no reason why we should depart from its simple and real meaning. For first there will be a relative without an antecedent, נִב, *nibu*, his word; and then there will be a change of number; for they apply it to the priests, his word, that is, the word of them — of whom? of the priests. It is common, I know, in Hebrew, to put a relative without an antecedent; but as I have said, nothing requires this here. The most suitable rendering then is, *Its provision*, that is, of the altar, *is the contemptible food* of God.^{f10} I take then the words to mean this, that a speech of this kind was often in the mouth of the people as well as of the priests, — "Oh! the provision for the altar is any kind of meat; be not so anxious in your choice, so as to offer the best animals; for God is satisfied even with the lean and the maimed."

And here again God reproves the impiety and contempt of the people; and at the same time he condemns their avarice, because they took the worst of their animals to offer in the temple, as though they lost everything they consecrated to God.

Why he calls the sacrifices the *meat* or food of God, we now sufficiently understand. Only this ought to be observed, that the impiety of the people was evident, as they were so unconcerned in their duties; for God had not in vain instituted sacrifices and other rites. The contempt then of the signs openly showed not only the negligence of the people, but also their contempt of all religion. Were any one at this day to regard as nothing outward teaching and the sacraments, would he not prove himself to be an impious despiser of God? Yet religion, I allow, does not consist in these things; for though hypocrites pretend the most ardent zeal, they yet profane the name of God, whenever the truth sounds in their ears and the heart is not touched, and when they come to the Lord's table and are at the same time alienated from Christ. These things I allow; but as no true servant of God can despise these ordinances, which on account of our

common infirmity are useful to us, and without which we cannot be as long as we sojourn in this world, whosoever derides our simplicity in frequenting God’s house, or if silent abstains from doing so, and regards such a practice as nothing or as unimportant, he is thus, as I have said, proved guilty of impiety. This is the reason why the Prophet so sharply reproves the Jews, because they said that the provision for the altar was God’s contemptible food. It follows —

<390113> MALACHI 1:13

13. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts: and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord.

13. Et dixistis, Ecce fatigatio (alii vertunt, Ecce ex fatigatione,) et sufflastis in illud, dicit Iehova exercituum; et obtulistis raptum et claudum et debile; et obtulistis Minchah (hoc est, oblationem;) an gratam hanc habebō e manu vestra, dicit Iehova.

He pursues the same subject — that the worship of God was despised by them and regarded as almost worthless. We must bear in mind what I have before stated — that the Jews are not reprehended here as though they had openly and avowedly spoken reproachfully of God’s worship; but that this was sufficiently evident from their conduct; for they allowed themselves so much licentiousness, that it was quite manifest that they were trifling with God, inasmuch as they had cast off every fear of him and all reverence towards him.

Ye have said, Behold, labor. This may apply to the whole people, or to the priests alone. It is commonly explained of the priests — that they complained that they had a hard office, because they were continually in the temple and constantly watched there, and were much occupied in cleaning the vessels.

The monks at this day under the Papacy, and the priests, boasting of themselves, say, “While all others sleep, we are watching; for we are constant in prayers.” Forsooth! they howl at midnight in their temples; and then by massing and by doing other strange things they imagine that they are seriously engaged in pacifying God. In this sense do some

understand this passage, as though the priests, in order to commend their work, alleged that they labored much in God's service, and as though God had enjoined on them many and difficult things. But I prefer applying this to the whole people, and yet I do not exclude the priests; for the Prophet here condemns both, and shows that it was wearisome to them to spend labor in worshipping God, that they considered it weariness, as we commonly say, *Tu le fais par courvee*.^{f11}

And the import of what follows is the same, *Ye have snuffed at it*, that is, through disdain. Some give this rendering, "With sorrow have ye moved him;" and the verb is in Hiphil, and is often taken in this sense. The verb, נפח, *nephech*, is properly to snuff; and it is here in another conjugation; but even in Hiphil it has this meaning, and cannot be taken otherwise. Now they who render it, to move or touch with sorrow, are under the necessity of turning the words of the Prophet to a sense the most foreign and remote, even that the priests, extremely greedy of gain, compelled the common people to bring sacrifices, and thus extorted sacrifices, but not without sorrow and lamentation. We see how forced this is: I therefore wholly reject it. Some have hammered out a very refined sense, which is by no means suitable, "Ye have snuffed at it," that is, Ye have said indeed that the victims are good and sufficiently fat; and yet ye may by breath blow them into the air. Others render it, to cast down, because they threw the sacrifices on the ground. But what need there is of departing from the common meaning of the word, since it is easy to conclude that both the priests and the people are here condemned, because the worship of God was a weariness to them, as we snuff at a thing when it displeases us. The behavior then of the fastidious is what the Prophet meant here to express. The passage will thus be very appropriate, Ye have said, *Behold weariness! Ye have snuffed at it*: then he adds, —

Ye have offered the torn, and the lame, and the weak. These words prove the same thing — that they performed their duty towards God in a trifling manner by offering improper victims: when they had anything defective or diseased, they said that it was sacred to God, as we find it stated in the next verse. Some improperly render, גזול, *gazul*, a prey, what had been unjustly procured, as though he had said, that they offered victims obtained by plunder: but I wonder how they could thus distort the words of the Prophet without any pretense. He mentions here three kinds — the torn, the lame, and the maimed or the feeble. Who then does not see that

the torn was an animal which had been torn by wild beasts? When therefore they had an animal half dead, having been torn by wolves, they thought that they had a suitable victim: “I am constrained to offer a sacrifice to God, this lamb is very suitable, for the wolf has devoured a part of it, and it has hardly escaped: as then it is maimed, I will bring it.” The Prophet then calls those torn victims which had been lacerated by the teeth of wild beasts.

We now understand the import of the words; but we must remember what I have said — that God required not the performance of external rites, because he had need of meat and drink, or because he set a great value on these sacrifices, but on account of their design. The sacrifices then which God demanded from his ancient people had in themselves nothing that promoted true religion; nor could the odour of sacrifices of itself delight God; but the end was to be regarded. As then God ordered and commanded sacrifices to be offered to him, that he might exercise his people in penitence and faith, it was for this reason that he valued them. But when the people had fallen into gross contempt of them, that they brought to God, as it were to insult him, the maimed and the lame, their extremely base and intolerable impiety, as I have already said, was made fully evident. This is the reason why the Prophet now so vehemently chides the priests and the whole people; they offered to God such sacrifices as man would have rejected, according to what we noticed yesterday. It then follows —

<390114> MALACHI 1:14

14. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.

14. Maledictus autem dolosus, qui dum est in grege sua masculus, et vovet et sacrificat corruptum Iehovae; quia Rex magnus ego, dicit Iehova exercituum; et nomen meum terribile in gentibus.

I cannot finish today, for I should be too long.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou dost not keep us at this day under the shadows of the law, by which thou didst train up the race of Abraham, but invitest us to a service far more excellent, even to consecrate ourselves, body and soul, as victims to thee, and to offer not only ourselves, but also sacrifices of praise and of prayer, as thou hast consecrated all the duties of religion which thou requirest from us, through Christ thy Son, — O grant, that we may seek true purity, and labor to render, by a real sincerity of heart, our services approved by thee, and so reverently profess and call upon thy name, that really fulfilled in us may that be which thou best declared by thy Prophet — that thy name shall be magnified and celebrated through the whole world, as it was truly made known to us in the person of thine only begotten Son. — Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY THIRD

I REPEATED yesterday the last verse of the first chapter, but I did not explain it. The Prophet declares here, that all who dealt deceitfully and unfaithfully with God were under a curse; and at the same time he specifies the kind of fraud practiced; they chose from the flock such as were diseased or defective to offer as sacrifices to God. It was indeed a proof of extreme dishonesty thus perversely to mock God: for as we have seen no man would bear such an insult. Then the Prophet, in order at once to complete what he had begun, distinctly says, that they were *all accursed*.

The verb, נבל, *necal*, means in Hebrew, to think; but it is taken almost at all times in a bad sense: hence interpreters have not improperly rendered it here, deceitful; but the deceit the Prophet meant to express is of this kind — when men craftily contrive for themselves vain pretences; for when they can cover their baseness before the world, they think that they are at the same time absolved in heaven. The Prophet then says, that they who think that they can escape God's judgment by such artifices are under a curse.

I come now to the kind of fraud they practiced, *If there be, he says, in his flock a male, that is, a lamb or a ram, when he vows, then what is corrupt he offers to Jehovah*. He then means, that though they pretended some religion, yet nothing was done by them with a sincere and honest heart; for they immediately repented of the vow made to God; they thought that they might be reduced to poverty, if they were too bountiful in their sacrifices. Hence then the Prophet proves that they offered to God with a double mind, and that whatever they thus offered was polluted, because it did not proceed from a right motive.

We said yesterday, that the Prophet did not require fat or lean beasts, because God valued either the blood or flesh of animals on its own account, but for the end in view; for these were the performances of religion by which God designed to train up the Jews for the end contemplated, and in the duty of repentance. As then they were so sordid as to these sacrifices, it was easy to conclude, that they were gross and profane despisers of God, and had no concern for religion.

The reason follows, *For a great king am I, saith Jehovah, and my name is terrible^{f12} among the nations.* God declares here that his majesty was of no account among the Jews, as though he had said, “With whom do you think that you have to do?” And this is what we ought carefully to consider when engaged in God’s service. We indeed know that it is a vice which has prevailed in all ages, that all nations and individuals thought that they worshipped God, when they devised foolish and frivolous rites according to their own fancies. If then we have a desire to worship God aright, we must remember how great he is; for his majesty will raise us up above the whole world, and cease will that audacity which possesses almost all mankind; for they think that their own will is a law, when they presumptuously obtrude anything on God. The greatness of God then ought to humble us, that we may not worship him according to the perceptions of our flesh, but offer him only what is worthy of his celestial glory.

He again repeats what we have before observed, though it was disregarded by the Jews, — that he was a *great king* through the whole world. As then the Jews thought that sacrifices could not be offered to God, such as he would accept, in any other place but at Jerusalem, and in the temple on Mount Sion, he testifies that he is a great king even in the farthest parts of the world. It hence follows, that God’s worship would not be confined to Judea, or to any other particular part of the world; for by the gospel the Lord would receive to himself all nations, and come into the possession of his kingdom. Now follows

CHAPTER 2

<390201> MALACHI 2:1, 2

1. And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you.

1. Et nunc ad vos praeceptum hoc, O sacerdotes,—

2. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse Your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart.

2. Si non audieritis et non posueritis super cor, ut detis gloriam nomini meo, dicit Iehova exercituum, mittam (copula hic abundat) in vos maledictionem et maledicam benedictionibus vestris, atque etiam maledixi eam (est mutatio numeri, pro eas,) quia non ponitis super cor.

Though the priests did not sin alone, yet it is not without reason, as we have said, that they were regarded as the first in wickedness; for it was their office to correct what the people did amiss. Their dissimulation had the effect of encouraging the common people to sin: hence the Prophet accuses them especially as the authors of impiety; and this is what the words intimate, if they are rightly considered.

To you, he says, *O priests*. They might have indeed exonerated themselves, or at least transferred a part of their guilt to others: “Oh! what can we do? for we see that the people are growing cold in God’s worship; it is better that imperfect sacrifices should be offered than none at all.” As then they might by evasion have somewhat extenuated their guilt, the Prophet the more sharply reproves them and says, *To you* especially *is addressed this command*, as they ought to have shown to others the right way; for when they dissembled, their connivance was nothing else but a consent; and thus they divested the people of God’s fear, and allowed them to corrupt the whole of religion by offering spurious sacrifices. *To you* then, he says, that is, “Though the whole people is guilty before God, think not that ye are on this account excused; for it behoves you to check this wickedness, for God has set you over the people as their teachers and guides: as then ye have

neglected your duty, whatever others have done amiss, falls justly on your heads. For how has it happened that the people have dared to proceed so far in impiety? even because you have no concern for religion; for God has promoted you to the priesthood for this end — to preserve in integrity the worship of his name; but ye know of all the prevailing profanations, and ye hold your peace: *To you then is this command.*”

He then adds, *If ye will not hear nor lay it to heart to give glory to my name*, etc. He seems here to threaten the priests alone; and yet if any one carefully considers the whole passage, he will easily perceive that this address extends to the whole people, in such a way however that it is in the first place directed to the priests; for as I have said the greater portion of the guilt belonged to them. God then denounces a heavy punishment on the whole people as well as on the priests, even that he would *send a curse*. But that they might not object and say that they were too severely dealt with, God shows how justly he was displeased with them, because they hearkened not nor attended to his warnings. What indeed is less tolerable than not to hear God speaking? But as many thought it enough to stretch the ear, and then immediately to forget what had been spoken, it is added, *If ye lay it not to heart*, that is, If ye attend not and seriously apply your hearts to what is said. We see then that the Prophet shows how that God had a just cause for severely punishing them; for it was an impiety not to be borne, when he could obtain no hearing from men. But the Prophet shows at the same time what it is to hear God; he therefore adds the latter clause as a definition or an explanation of the former: for God is not heard, if we receive with levity his words, so that they soon vanish away; but we hear them when we lay them on the heart, or, as the Latins say, when we apply the mind to them. There is then required a serious attention, otherwise it will be the same as though the ears were closed against God.

Let us further learn from this passage that obedience is of so much account with God, that he bears nothing less than a contempt of his word or a careless attention to it, as though we regarded not its authority. We must also notice that our guilt before God is increased and enhanced, when he recalls us to the right way, and seeks to promote our welfare by warning and exhorting us. When therefore God is thus kindly careful for our salvation, we are doubly inexcusable, if we perversely reject his teaching, warnings, counsels, and other remedies which he may apply.

He now adds, *I will send on you a curse*; and this curse he immediately explains, *I will curse your blessings.*^{f13} The word blessing, we know, means everywhere in Scripture the beneficence or kindness of God. God then is said to bless us when he bountifully supports us and supplies whatever is necessary for us. And hence seems to have arisen the expression, that God by his nod alone can satisfy us with all abundance of good things. By blessings then he means a large and an abundant provision, and also rest from enemies, a healthy air, and everything of this kind. Some think that those prayers are intended, by which the priest blessed the people; but there is no reason for this. God then had manifested his favor to the Jews; he now declares that he will deprive them of all his benefits, that they might know that he is not propitious to them. Blessings then are evidences of God's bounty and paternal favor.

But he immediately adds, *Yea, I have cursed.* By which words he proves their senselessness: for they were not even taught by their evils, which yet produce some effect even on fools, who, according to the common proverb, begin to be wise when they are chastised. God then here reproves the stupidity of the Jews; for they had already been deprived of his benefits, and they might have known by experience that he was not propitious to them, but on the contrary an angry judge; and yet they were touched by no penitence, according to what we have seen in the other Prophets.

We now understand the import of the words, and at the same time the object of the Prophet: *I will then curse your blessings, and what is more,* (so I explain, **אגם**, *ugam*.) *I have already cursed* them: but ye are like blocks of wood or stones; for the very scourges avail nothing with you. He again repeats, *because ye lay it not on your heart*, in order to show that he could not bear the contempt of his word, for it was, as we have said, a sign of extreme impiety. It follows

3. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.

3. Ecce ego corrumpo (vel perdo) vobis semen (vertunt Graeci, brachium; sed decepti sunt in una litera,) et spergam stercus super facies vestras, stercus solemnitarum vestrarum; et tollet vos ad se (alii vertunt, tollet vos ad ipsum; sed coacta est illa expositio.)

He confirms here again what he had said in the last verse, — that they would perceive God’s curse in want and poverty. The curse of God is any kind of calamity; for as God declares especially his favor by a liberal support, so the sterility of the land and defective produce most clearly evidence the curse of God. The Prophet then shows, by mentioning one thing, what sort of curse was nigh the Jews, — that God would *destroy* their *seed*. Some read, but improperly, “I will destroy you and the seed.” I wonder how learned men make such puerile mistakes, when there is nothing ambiguous in the Prophet’s words. *I will destroy* then *for you the seed*; that is, “Sow as much as you please, I will yet destroy your seed, so that it shall produce no fruit.” In short, he threatens the Jews with want and famine; for the land would produce nothing when cursed by God. ^{f14}

But as the Jews flattered themselves on account of their descent, and ever boasted of their fathers, and as that preeminence with which God had favored them proved to them an occasion of haughtiness and pride, the Prophet here ridicules this foolish confidence, *I will scatter dung*, he says, *on your faces*: “Ye are a holy nation, ye are the chosen seed of Abraham, ye are a royal priesthood; these are your boastings; but the Lord will render your faces filthy with dung; this will be your nobility and preeminence! there is then no reason for you to think yourselves exempt from punishments because God has adopted you; for as ye have abused his benefits and profaned his name, so ye shall also find in your turn, that he will cover you with everything disgraceful and ignominious, so as to make you wholly filthy: ye shall then be covered all over with dung, and shall not be the holy seed of Abraham.”

But as they might have again raised a clamor and say, “Have we then in vain so diligently served God? why has he bidden a temple to be built for him by us and promised to dwell there? God then has deceived us, or at least his promises avail nothing, — “the Prophet gives this answer, “God will overwhelm you with disgrace and also your sacrifices.” But he calls them the *dung of solemnities*, as though he had said, “I will cover you with reproach on account of your impiety, which is seen in your sacrifices.” Had the Jews any holiness they derived it from their sacrifices, by which they expiated their sins and reconciled themselves to God: but the Prophet says that it was their special ill-savor which offended God, and which he abominated, because they vitiated their sacrifices. Nor is that to be disapproved which some of the rabbins have said, that the Prophet alludes to the oxen, calves, and rams; for when the Jews from various places brought their sacrifices, there must have been much dung from all that vast number. There is then here a striking allusion to the victims themselves, as though he had said, “Ye think that I can be pacified by your sacrifices, as though loads of dung were pleasing to me; for when ye bring such a vast number, even the place itself, the area before the temple, throws an ill-savor on account of the dung that is there. Ye are then, forsooth! holy, and all your filth is cleansed away by means of this dung. Begone then together with the dung of your solemnities; for I will cast this very dung on your heads.”

We now perceive what the Prophet means: and emphatical are the words, *Behold I*; for God by these single words cuts off all those pretences by which the Jews deceived themselves, and thought that their vices were concealed from God: “I myself,” he says, “am present, to whom ye think your sacrifices to be acceptable; *I then will destroy your seed, and I will also cast dung on your faces*; all the dignity which ye pretend shall be abolished, for ye think that ye are defended by a sort of privilege, when ye boast yourselves to be the seed of Abraham: it is dung, it is dung,” he says. He afterwards shows what was especially the dung and the filth: for when they objected and said, “What! have our sacrifices availed nothing?” he answers, “Nay, I will cast that dung upon you, because the chief pollution is in your sacrifices, for ye vitiate and adulterate my service: and what else is your sacrifice but profanation only? ye are sacrilegious in all your empty pomps. Since then all your victims have an ill-savor and displease me, and as I nauseate them, (as it is also said in the first and last chapter of Isaiah,)

I will heap the dung on your own heads, because ye think it to be your chief expiation.”

He adds at last, *It shall take you to itself*; that is, “Ye shall be dung altogether; and thus all your boastings, that ye are descended from the holy Patriarch Abraham, shall be wholly useless; though I made a covenant and promised that you should be to me a royal priesthood, yet the dung shall *take you to itself*, and thus whatever dignity I have hitherto conferred on you shall be taken away.”^{f15} Let us proceed

<390204> **MALACHI 2:4**

4. And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the Lord of hosts.

4. Et scietis quod miserim ad vos hoc mandatum ut sit (vel, ut esset; sed magis placet, ut sit; est, ad assendum, ad verbum; ergo ad assendum pactum meum, si posset dici Latine,) pactum meum cum Levi, dicit Iehova exercituum.

Here he addresses in particular the priests; for though the whole people with great haughtiness resisted God, yet the priests surpassed them. And we know how ready men are to turn to evil whatever benefits God may bestow on them. It has been then a common evil in men from the beginning of the world, to exalt themselves and to raise their crests against God, when they found themselves adorned with his benefits: but we know that the more any one is bound to God the more thankful he ought to be, for our gifts are not our own, but the benefits by which God binds us to himself.

“What best thou as thine own?” says Paul, “thou best then no reason to glory.” (<460407> 1 Corinthians 4:7)

This evil however has ever prevailed among men — that they have defrauded God of his glory, and have turned to an occasion of pride the favors received from him. But it is an evil which is very commonly seen in all governors; for they who are raised to a high dignity, think no more that they are men, but take to themselves very great liberty when they find themselves so much exalted above others. Thus kings and those in authority seem to themselves to be above the common order of men, and

presumptuously disregard all laws; they think that everything is lawful for them, as no one opposes their willfulness. The same thing is also to be seen in teachers. For when God favored the priests with the highest honor, they became blinded, as it will hereafter be seen, by that favor of God, that they thought themselves to be as it were semi-gods; and the same thing has taken place in the kingdom of Christ.

For how have arisen so great impieties under the Papacy, except that pastors have exercised tyranny and not just government? For they have not regarded the purpose for which they have been called into their office, but as the name of pastor is in itself honorable, they have dared to raise themselves above the clouds, and to assume to themselves the authority of God himself. Hence it has been, that they have dared to bind consciences by their own laws, to change the whole truth, and to corrupt the whole worship of God: and hence also followed the scandalous sale of justice. How have these things happened? Because priests were counted as angels come down from heaven; and this same danger is ever to be feared by us.

This then is the vice which the Prophet now refers to; and he shows that the priests had no reason to think that they could shake off the yoke, *Ye shall know*, he says, *that to you belongs this command*. We indeed see what they objected to Jeremiah,

“The law shall not depart from the priests nor counsel and wisdom from the elders.” (<241818> Jeremiah 18:18.)

These are the weapons by which the Papists at this day defend themselves. When we allege against them plain proofs from Scripture, they find themselves clearly reprov'd and convicted by God's word; but here is their Ajax's shield, under which they hide all their wickedness, retailing as it were from the ungodly and wicked priests what is related by Jeremiah, “The law shall not depart from the priests; we are the Church, can it err? is not the Holy Spirit dwelling in the midst of us? ‘I am with you always to the end of the world,’ (<402820> Matthew 28:20;) did Christ intend to deceive his Church when he said this to his Apostles? and we are their successors.” The Prophet now gives the answer, *Ye shall know*, he says, *that to you, belongs this command*.

And he adds, not without severity, *that my covenant may be with Levi*; ^{f16} as though he had said, “On what account are ye thus elated? for God

cannot get a hearing for himself, yet ye say that the covenant with Levi is not to be void, as though God had put Levi in his own place, and divested himself of all authority when he appointed that tribe, and made you ministers of the temple and teachers of the people; is he nothing? What was God's purpose when he honored you with that dignity? He certainly did not mean to reduce himself to nothing, but, on the contrary, his will was, that his own right should remain entire and complete. When therefore I reprove your vices, and show that ye are become vile, and as it were dung, that ye are defiled by everything disgraceful, — when I make these things openly known, I do not violate the covenant made with Levi. God then justly summons you before his tribunal, and strips you of your honor, in order that the covenant he made with Levi may be confirmed and ratified." This is, as I have said, a severe derision.

But we may hence learn a useful truth. The Prophet briefly teaches us that the priestly office takes away nothing from God's authority, who requires a pure and holy worship, and that it lessens in nothing the authority of the law, for sound doctrine ought ever to prevail. So at this day, when we resist the Papal priests, we do not violate God's covenant, that is, it is no departure from the order of the Church, which ought ever to remain sacred and inviolable. We do not then on account of men's vices, subvert the pastoral office, and the preaching of the word; but we assail the men themselves, so that due order may be restored, that sound doctrine may obtain a hearing among men, that the worship of God may be pure, which these unprincipled men have violated. We therefore boldly attempt to subvert the whole of the Papacy, with this full confidence, that we lessen nothing from the authority of teaching, nor in any way defraud the pastoral office; nay, order in the Church, the preaching of the truth, and the very dignity of pastors, cannot exist, except the Church be purged from its defilements, and its filth removed. Thus must we say also of those unprincipled men, who are too nearly connected with us, or too near us, and I wish they were wholly extinct in the world: but how many pests conceal themselves under this covering, or under this mask — "What! are we not the ministers of the word?" So say you who are without any principle; I wish ye were in your dung, or in your cells, where formerly ye too much corrupted the world; but now the devil has brought you forth into the Church of God, that ye may corrupt whatever had hitherto remained sound. As then there are many at this day who boast of this

honor — that they are ministers of the word, and pastors, and that they teach the gospel, they ought to be checked by this answer of the Prophet — that when all their corruptions are fully and really cleansed away, then confirmed and ratified will be the compact which God would have to be valid with his Church and with the ministers of his word. He then adds an explanation —

<390205> **MALACHI 2:5**

5. My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name.

5. Foedus meum fuit cum eo vitae et pacis; et dedi illi timorem; et timuit me, et a facie nominis mei contritus fuit.

The Prophet now proves more clearly how God violates not his covenant, when he freely rebukes the priests, and exposes also their false attempts in absurdly applying to themselves the covenant of God, like the Papal priests at this day, who say that they are the Church. How? because they have in a regular order succeeded the apostles; but this is a foolish and ridiculous definition; for he who occupies the place of another ought not on that account only to be deemed a successor. Were a thief to kill the master of a family, and to occupy his place, and to take possession of all his goods, is he to be accounted his legitimate successor? So these dishonest men, to show that they are to be regarded as apostles, only allege a continued course of succession; but the likeness between them ought rather to be the subject of inquiry. We must see first whether they have been called, and then whether they answer to their calling; neither of which can they prove. Then their definition is altogether frivolous.

So also our Prophet here shows, that the priests made pretences and deceived the common people, while they sought to prove themselves heirs of the covenant which God had made with Levi their father, that is, with the tribe itself. “I shall be faithful,” says God, “and my faithfulness will be evident from the compact itself; *my compact with your father was that of life and peace:*^{f17} but it was mutual: ye seem not to think that there are two parties in a compact, and that there is, according to what is commonly said, a reciprocal obligation: but I on my part promised to your father to be his father, and I also stipulated with him that he was to obey me, to

obey my word, and whatever I might afterwards require. Now ye will have me to be bound to you, and yourselves to be free from every obligation. What equity is this — that I should owe everything to you and you nothing to me? *My compact* then *with him was that of life and peace*; but what is your compact? what is it that ye owe to me? Even what the mutual compact which I made with your father Levi and his tribe requires; perform this, and ye shall find that I am faithful and constant in all my promises.” I cannot go farther now.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God that as thou hast been pleased to choose us at this day thy priests, and hast consecrated us to thyself by the blood of thine only-begotten Son and through the grace of thy Spirit, — O grant, that we may rightly and sincerely perform our duties to thee, and be so devoted to thee that thy name may be really glorified in us; and may we be thus more and more confirmed in the hope of those promises by which thou not only guides us through the course of this earthly life, but also invites us to thy celestial inheritance; and may Christ thy Son so rule in us, that we may ever cleave to our head, and be gathered as his members into a participation of that eternal glory into which he has gone before us. — Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOURTH

WE began in the last lecture to explain what the Prophet says here of the priesthood, and we have said that the sum of the whole is — that wicked priests in vain lay claim to the title of honor, who do not faithfully perform their office; for the compact between God and them is mutual, inasmuch as God did not institute priests under the law in order to allow them unbridled liberty, or to deprive himself of every power; but, on the contrary, he set them over the Church in order to retain the people in true religion. As then the obligation is, as they say, reciprocal, there is no reason for the priests to arrogate supreme power and to deprive God of it. The Prophet then had said, that God's compact with Levi was that of life and peace, because God, who is faithful in his promises, had promised to be propitious to the Levites. Our Prophet therefore calls it the compact of life and peace, because the Levites had found that God was in every respect kind and bountiful, whenever they performed their parts.

He now adds, *I gave to him fear, and he feared me*. The interpreters who consider the preposition *for*, or, on account of (*propter*), to be understood, pervert the whole sense; for fear here is to be taken for the rule of worshipping God, as though he had said, "I have prescribed how he is rightly to perform his office." He means then that God gave to the Levites a knowledge of the way in which he was to be served, because he would not have them to wander according to their own notions, but he prescribed to them the duties of their office, as though he had said, "Ye are indeed endowed with no common honor, for ye are the teachers of the Church; but yet I have laid a restraint upon you, as I have commanded the people to obey you, so have I commanded you what to do. Since then I have given my fear to Levi, since I have prescribed how he is to worship me, is it not now most shameless and most impious, to boast of the honorable name of priesthood, and at the same time to be no priests? for what is it to be God's priest, except to govern the Church as God has commanded? *I have then given him my fear.*"^{f18}

And he feared me; that is, he observed the law laid down for him; *and he was contrite before my name*; that is, "he conducted himself in a humble manner, he did not exalt himself by vain pride, that he might oppress my Church, rule tyrannically, and subvert all due order; but he was an example

of humility, for he owned himself the more bound to me, because I honored him with so much dignity as to make him the ruler of my Church.” It afterwards follows —

<390206> **MALACHI 2:6**

6. The law of the truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity and did turn many away from iniquity.

6. Lex veritatis fuit in ore ejus, et iniquitates non fuit reperta, in labiis ejus; in pace et rectitudine ambulavit mecum; et multos redire fecit (hoc est, convertit) ab iniquitate.

He explains more fully how Levi responded to God’s command, — that he had *the law of truth in his mouth*. The chief duty of a priest is to show the right way of living to the people; for however upright and holy one may be through his whole life, he is not on that account to be deemed a priest. Hence our Prophet dwells especially on this point — that Levi taught the people. He does not speak of Levi himself; for we know that Levi was dead when Aaron was made a priest. For God does not here speak of individuals, but of the tribe; as though he had said, “Aaron and Eleazar, and those who followed them, knew for what end they were honored with the priesthood, and they faithfully performed their duties.” The Prophet now explains what God mainly requires from priests — to show to the people, as I have already said, the way of living a pious and holy life; but he adopts different words, which yet mean the same thing.

The law of truth, he says, *was in his mouth*. Why does he not commend the integrity of his heart rather than his words? Had he spoken of an individual, the Prophet might have justly said, that he who sought to be an approved servant of God, had conducted himself harmless towards men; but he speaks of a public office, when he says, that the law of truth was in his mouth; for he is not worthy of that honor who is mute: and nothing is more preposterous, or even more ridiculous, than that those should be counted priests who are no teachers. These two things are, as they say, inseparable — the office of the priesthood and teaching.

And that he might more clearly show that he speaks not of an ordinary matter, he repeats the same thing in other words, *Iniquity was not found in*

his lips. We hence see that all this belongs peculiarly to the sacerdotal office. He afterwards adds, *In peace and rectitude he walked before me*. The Prophet here commends also the sincere concern for religion which the first priests manifested, for they walked with God in peace and uprightness; they not only carried signals in their lips and mouth, by which they might have been justly deemed the ministers of God and the pastors of his Church; but they also executed faithfully their office. And he alludes to the peace of which he had spoken: as God then had promised peace to the Levites, so also he says, that the Levites had lived themselves peaceably before God; for they did not break the covenant which he had made with them. As then they had responded to the stipulation of God, he says that they had walked in peace: but he also mentions how this was; it was, because they had walked in uprightness.

And the phrase, אִתִּי, *ati*, with me, ought to be observed; for it confirms what I have stated, — that the honor of the priesthood in no way lessens God’s authority, for he keeps the priests devoted to himself. He intimates then that they were not elevated to such a height, that their dignity took away anything from God’s authority: for the obligation, which has been mentioned, ought to be mutual: God is faithful; the priests also must be faithful in their office, and show themselves to be the legitimate ministers of God. ^{f19}

He also mentions the fruit of their doctrine; for Levi *turned many from iniquity*, that is, he led many to repentance. It afterwards follows (for this verse ought to be joined) —

<390207> MALACHI 2:7	
7. For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.	7. Certe labia sacerdotis custodient scientiam, et Legem requirent ex ore ejus, quia nuntius Iehovae exercituum est.

What the Prophet has said of the first priests he extends now to the whole Levitical tribe, and shows that it was a perpetual and unchangeable law as to the priesthood. He had said that Levi had been set over the Church, not to apply to himself the honor due to God, but to stand in his own place as the minister of God, and the teacher of the chosen people. The same thing

he now confirms, declaring it as a general truth that *the lips of the priest ought to retain knowledge*, as though he had said, that they were to be the store-house from which the food of the Church was to be drawn. God then did appoint the priests over his chosen people, that the people might seek their food from them as from a store-room, according to what we find to be the case with a master of a family, who has his store of wine and his store of provisions. As then the food of a whole family is usually drawn out from places where provisions are laid up, so the Prophet makes use of this similitude, — that God has deposited knowledge with the priests, so that the mouth of every priest might be a kind of store-house, so to speak, from which the people are to seek knowledge and the rule of a religious life: *Keep knowledge then shall the lips of the priest, and the law shall they seek from his mouth.*^{f20}

He shows how it is to be kept; the priests are not to withhold it, but the whole Church is to enjoy the knowledge of which they are the keepers. They shall then seek or demand the law from his mouth.

Law may be taken simply for truth; but the Prophet no doubt alludes here to the doctrine of Moses, the only true fountain of all knowledge. We indeed know that God included in his law whatever was necessary for the welfare of his Church; nor was there anything added by the Prophets. Our Prophet then so includes every truth in the word, **תורה**, *ture*, law, that he might at the same time show that it was laid up in what Moses has taught.

He says in the last place, that the priest is the *messenger of Jehovah*. He briefly defines here what the priesthood is, even an embassy which God commits to men, that they may be his interpreters in teaching and ruling the Church. What then is a priest? A messenger of God, and his interpreter. It hence follows that the office of teaching cannot be separated from the priesthood; for it is a monstrous thing when any one boasts himself to be a priest, when he is no teacher. The Prophet then draws an argument from the definition itself, when he says that a priest is a *messenger* of God. Then follows the contrast when he says

8. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts.

8. Atqui vos declinastis e via, impingere (vel, ruere) fecistis multos in lege; corrupistis foedus Levi, dicit Iehova exercituum.

He shows here how far were the priests of his time from fulfilling that compact which he had mentioned. He hence concludes that they were unworthy of the honor of which they were so confidently proud, and under the shadow of which they sought to cover their vices, as though they were not bound to God, and were at liberty to tread the Church under foot with impunity. He then shows that it was an extremely foolish arrogance in them to seek to be exempt from all law, and yet to regard God and the whole Church bound to them.

He says first, that they *deviated from the way*, that is, they exhibited nothing suitable to their office, on account of which they were counted priests. He then amplifies their guilt — that they *made many to stumble in the law*.^{f21} He had before said that Levi walked in peace and uprightness; what he now says is very different — that the priests, forgetting religion, had first shaken off the yoke. He had said that Levi restored many from iniquity; but he now says that the priests made many to stumble.

He adds in the last place — *Ye have therefore corrupted the covenant*. An illative is to be put here, for so ought the sentence to be explained — “As ye have deviated from the way, and perverted the whole worship of God, ye have thus violated the compact which had been sanctioned with Levi; ye have then no reason to boast of your title of honor, for succession failed when ye fell away from the faithfulness of your father Levi.” At length it follows —

9. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.

9. Atqui etiam ego dedi vos probrosos et abjectos toti populo, secundum quod non servastis vias meas, et extulistis personas in lege.

The Prophet draws this conclusion — that the priests in vain gloried in the honor of their office, for they had ceased to be the priests of God. We may now return to the main point.

We perceive what the subject is which the Prophet handles here: as the priests sought by a peculiar privilege to exempt themselves from all reproof, he assails them in particular; for teaching would have been useless as to the common people, except the priests themselves were brought to order. The priests no doubt flattered the people, and thus attempted to deprive the Prophets of every respect, in order that their doctrine might produce no effect. This is the reason why our Prophet so sharply reproves them. But we must consider the state of the case. The priests said that they had been set, by divine authority, over the whole Church, and that they could not be deprived of that honor which they had received from God. They however took only but one part of the covenant, and yet sought to deprive God of his right. The Prophet here answers them — that God had indeed favored them with no common honor in appointing them the priests of his Church, but that the compact, which included a mutual stipulation, was at the same time to be considered; for God had not simply appointed them the guides of his Church, but had also added a condition.

We hence see that the hinge of the matter was, that the priests presumptuously and absurdly laid hold on what favored only their own cause, and at the same time passed by and cunningly overlooked the chief thing — that the priesthood was connected with the worship of God. Now had they attained what they wished, there would have been no God in the Church, but they would have exercised over it a tyrannical power. But it has ever been, and is still the will of God, to retain the supreme power over mortals in his own hand.

Having now seen the design of the Prophet, we may easily perceive the import of the whole subject. But before we proceed farther, we must first observe, that we have here described to us the character of true and legitimate priests; for the Prophet not only speaks of the office of priests, but sets before us a living image in which we cannot be deceived: and hence all who are engaged in the pastoral office may know what God requires from them. I will only just mention what he first says — that God gave fear to priests; for I have already given a sufficient explanation of this by saying, that priests are not to abuse their right, as though the highest power were granted to them; for God will not have his Church subject to tyranny, but his will is to reign alone in it through the ministry of men. The main thing then to be borne in mind is this — that a rule is prescribed to priests, that though they preside and possess the first rank of honor among the people, it is yet under certain conditions.

We shall now consider only this which the Prophet says — that Levi faithfully and sincerely performed his office, because *the law of truth was in his mouth*, and *no iniquity was found in his lips*; to which we ought yet to add the general truth which immediately follows — that the priest's lips ought to keep knowledge. It is then a law which cannot be abolished, that those who are priests or pastors in the Church are to be teachers. And not unwisely does Gregory apply a custom under the law to this subject; for we know that appended to the priest's dress were bells; and it is distinctly commanded by Moses, that the priest should not go forth without this sound, (^{<022835>}Exodus 28:35.) Gregory, as I have said, accommodated this to teaching — “Woe,” he says, “to us, if we go forth without sound, that is, if we boast that we are pastors, and in the meantime are dumb dogs; for nothing is less tolerable than that he who speaks not in the Church and whose voice is not clearly heard to the edification of the people, should be deemed a pastor.” This is what a Roman Pope has said. Let those who now proudly and confidently boast themselves to be his successors, at least give the sound, and let us hear what they teach: but as their whole power is exercised in cruelty, it is evident how faithfully they keep God's covenant! But I now return to the words of the Prophet.

He says, that this law has been fixed by God, and that it cannot be nullified by any decrees or customs of men, — that the priest is to *keep knowledge* in his lips. He farther explains himself by showing that the priest is to be the keeper of knowledge, not that he may reserve it for himself, but that he

may teach the whole people: *they shall seek*, he says, *the law from his mouth*; and afterwards he confines knowledge to true doctrine, as it was to flow from the law of God, the only true fountain of truth; for he had said, that the law of truth was in the mouth of Levi. It would not then be enough for one to have his mouth open and to be prepared to teach others, except purity of doctrine be retained. We hence see, that not only teaching is required from priests, but pure teaching, derived from the very mouth of God, according to what is said in ^{<260317>}Ezekiel 3:17,

“Thou shalt receive from my mouth the word, and shalt declare it to them from me.”

God shows there that the Prophets had no such authority as that they could bring forth anything they pleased, or what they thought would be right, but that they were so far faithful teachers as they were his disciples alone: hence he bids him to seek the word from his mouth; and then he adds, “Thou shalt declare it to them from my mouth.” So also it is said in ^{<242328>}Jeremiah 23:28,

“What is the chaff to the wheat? The Prophet who has a dream, let him declare his dream; but he who has my word, let him declare my word faithfully.”

Here God limits and defines the prophetic right, as though he had said, that the Prophets were not appointed, that they might bring anything indiscriminately, but that each, according to the measure of what was revealed to him, might faithfully dispense, or deliver, as it were from hand to hand, what he had received from heaven: for by mentioning two things, it was God’s design to show that no doctrine is to be allowed, except what he himself has revealed; and he compares to chaff whatever men devise themselves, while the pure doctrine of the law is to be regarded as the wheat. This is then the second thing to be noticed in what the Prophet says in this passage: but we must also consider the last thing — that the priest is the *messenger* of the God of hosts.

This seems to have been said in honor of the priesthood; but the Prophet means that priests have nothing of their own or separate from God, and that whatever reverence is due to them ought to be referred to God himself, whose ministers they are. I have said that he reasons from the definition itself, as though he had said, that every one who would be a priest must

also be a teacher. But we must also observe, that there is an implied comparison between God and priests, as though he had said, “Priests can claim nothing for themselves, but as interpreters of God.” Hence, the plain conclusion is, that the priesthood takes away nothing from God’s authority.

We now see that the Prophet includes in these few words two things of great importance — that there is no priesthood without doctrine or teaching, and no priest except he who faithfully performs his office as a teacher: and secondly, that God resigns not his own right and power when priests are set over the Church; for God commits to them the ministration only, and on this condition, that the authority remains in himself alone; for otherwise the priest would not be the messenger of the God of hosts. Among other things the Prophet requires also this of the priests — that they sincerely perform their duties. We indeed know that many apparently discharge their office, and excel in teaching, and carefully apply to their duties; but ambition stimulates some and avarice others. Hence the Prophet lays down another condition — that they are to walk in uprightness before God; that is, that they are not only to satisfy men, or to catch at the applause of the world, but to discharge their office with a pure conscience.

Thus have I shown that there is here set before our eyes a pattern by which we may know what God requires from us when he makes us pastors over his Church.

Now follows a reprobation of their conduct, for the Prophet says, *Ye have departed from the way*. Since he so boldly chastises the priests, we hence learn that they were subject to reproof; and nothing is more unreasonable than that the Papal clergy should seek to be exempt from every law and discipline, for the priests are here called to order, that they might know their own faults: *Ye have departed*, he says, *from the way*, and then, *ye have made many to err in the law*. This second thing being added, the priests ought by no means to be spared. When they sin only privately, though they may by bad examples corrupt the Church, yet this may somehow be borne with; but when they corrupt and deprave sound doctrine, when they subvert the order laid down in the law, they deserve no indulgence. This is the reason why Malachi so severely and so boldly reproveth them.

He at last adds, *Ye have therefore violated the covenant*. This third clause may indeed be explained in two ways, — that the Prophet proceeds with his reproof, or that he draws a conclusion from the preceding clauses, — that they were deservedly stripped of all honor, because they stood not to the covenant. Now this latter exposition is the most suitable, according to what I have already stated. He then as I have said, draws this conclusion, that their boasting was foolish, that they in vain said that they were a holy tribe whom God had chosen to be a peculiar possession to himself, for he says that the covenant of Levi had been violated by them; and this clause is set in opposition to the former, in which he says, ye shall know that my covenant was with Levi. We said then that the unfaithful ever contrive some disguise when they are reproved, as though they would deprive God of his right: so the Levitical priests said, that what God had once established could not be made void. Under this pretext, that they were of the holy tribe, they sought to be deemed holy; the Prophet then said to them, ye shall know that God's covenant is holy, and that ye are not holy. So also in this place, *Ye have violated*^{f22} *the covenant of Levi*, that is, “ye in vain pretend that you have been chosen by God, and that the honor of your priesthood has been confirmed to you; for God intended that his law, laid down by himself, should be kept. As then ye have violated the covenant of Levi, ye are no more Levites; as ye are become degenerated children, your inheritance is rightly taken away from you, and ye are deprived of the honor of the priesthood.

And corresponding with this view is what follows, *And I have already rendered* (or, will render) *you despicable and base to the whole people*,^{f23} *as ye have not kept my ways and had respect of persons in the law*.^{f24} God first shows that he was now bound by no law, so that he would not cast away these unfaithful priests who had broken his covenant. He also adds, that they had *respect to persons in the law*, for they coveted gain, and therefore turned to gratify men, and corrupted the whole truth of religion; and this is indeed a necessary consequence, when ambition or avarice bears rule, there can then be no sincerity, and the teaching of true religion will be adulterated. I cannot now finish. We shall consider tomorrow the difference between the ancient priesthood and that of the Christian Church.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast deigned to take us as a priesthood to thyself, and hast chosen us when we were not only of the lowest condition, but even profane and alien to all holiness, and hast consecrated us to thyself by thy Holy Spirit, that we may offer ourselves as holy victims to thee, — O grant, that we may bear in mind our office and our calling, and sincerely devote ourselves to thy service, and so present to thee our efforts and our labors, that thy name may be truly glorified in us, and that it may really appear that we have been in grafted into the body of thy only-begotten Son; and as he is the chief and the only true and perpetual priest, may we become partakers of that priesthood with which thou hast been pleased to honor him, so that he may take us as associates to himself; and may thus thy name be perpetually glorified by the whole body as well as by the head. — Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIFTH

WE said yesterday, that the priests of the ancient Church were made its guides on the condition that they faithfully discharged their office, and further, that when wicked priests who acted perfidiously in their office boasted of their dignity, this false pretense was to be deemed as nothing, the title being claimed without the reality. These two things we have explained.

We must now see whether this applies to the state and discipline of the Christian Church. The Papists deny this, for they wish to rule freely and with unbridled license, and to perform nothing to God, as though their very dignity nullified his authority; but they cannot shake off the yoke, except they deprive God of all his right. Nor is it a wonder that they act in this way; for even under the law the Prophet had a hard contest with ungodly priests, who had fallen away from the duties of their office, their calling being ever in their mouths, though they very far departed from the law which God had prescribed to them. There is therefore nothing new in the case of the Papists, who seek to be free from every law, that they may do whatever they please and despise all reproofs; for they indeed possess power, and that tyrannical and barbarous. But what they say we ought to disregard, for God declares from above what we here read in the Prophet's words, — that he so rules the Church, that he is supreme above all mortals. It was not God's will, most surely, after Christ's coming in the flesh, to abandon the care and government of his Church, nor was it his will to be forced to submit as a private individual. If then the authority of God remains at this day safe and secure, it follows that nothing is changed in this respect as to his right over the priesthood. Whatever authority they pretend, who would be deemed pastors of the Church, they must necessarily so continue in their station as faithfully to perform the office which has been committed to them from above; for as God has raised them to that great honor, so he has also stipulated with them, that they should faithfully rule the Church.

But if the Papal clergy compare themselves with the Levitical priests, they will find that the latter had the advantage; for God, as it is well known, instituted an hereditary priesthood under the law. His purpose was, that after the coming of Christ pastors should be made by the suffrages of the

Church; but the Levitical tribe claimed this honor as their own right under the law; for God had deposited the right and honor of the priesthood in that tribe. If then the Papists contend that more is due to them than to the Levitical priests, their claim is absurd; for there is no hereditary right, so that sons succeed their fathers in the ministry or pastoral office. We hence see that if a comparison be in this respect made, the priesthood under the law was as to succession far more important. And we know also what God had promised to Aaron and to his successors. From Aaron the dignity passed to the posterity of Phinehas, and he seems to have been favored, and also his descendants, with an unalienable right. But God here expostulates with the priests, because they had violated the compact; and hence he says that he was no longer bound to them, because they had become covenant-breakers and apostates. Let now the Pope, with all his party, pretend what they please, most certain it is, that all they can allege vanish into nothing compared with the lofty claims which the Levitical priests might have apparently made.

The Pope says that the apostolic seat was fixed at Rome, because it was said to Peter, “Thou art Peter,” etc. (<401618>Matthew 16:18.) I will not stop here to refute trifles of this kind; for there is no need of many words in discussing this point — whether this ought to be confined to the person of Peter, or whether it is to be extended to others; as it is not there stated. He says that Peter was a Roman bishop. Though this be conceded, (which yet can be easily disproved by history,) it does not follow that the primacy by a sort of hereditary right was transferred to all Roman bishops. Hence the succession, of which they proudly boast, is a mere fume. But were we to grant all they require, we must make this exception, — that the priesthood was not fixed to the place, so that every one called the bishop of the Roman Church should at the same time obtain the primacy, and be reputed head of the whole Church.

We must also in the second place see what sort of thing is the Papal priesthood; for though that beast appoints his own priests, it follows not that it is the ordination of Christ: nor is it anything like it. For what is a priest under the Papacy? even one who sacrifices Christ, that is, who robs Christ of that honor which the heavenly Father has confirmed to him by a solemn oath. Christ was called a priest; and this honor, as I have just said, was confirmed to him by an oath. All the Papal priests are inaugurated into their office, it at they may sacrifice: “We give to thee power to offer

appeasing sacrifices;” for thus they inaugurate them: and such words are suitable to the Papists; for those magical superstitions, which the Romans formerly used, continue still under the Papacy. We hence see, that when we examine the Papal priesthood according to the rule of Christ, it is altogether profane, nay, wholly sacrilegious.

But were their calling lawful, were we to grant that they are pastors of the Church, by a continued succession from the apostles, we must yet deny that they are to be allowed to claim all kinds of liberty and to tyrannize over the Church without being reprov'd; for whence do they derive such a privilege?

We therefore in short draw this conclusion — that what we read here of the Levitical priests not only applies to the Papal priests, but also bears with much more force against them; for they have no hereditary honor, their calling is not true nor legitimate, and they cannot be counted the pastors of the Church; on the other hand, they deprive Christ of his honor, yea, they daily sacrifice and slay him. We hence conclude, that they ought by no means to be suffered in the Church, for the covenant of God ought to remain inviolable; and what is it? that they keep the law of God in their mouth, and be his messengers and interpreters. When we see that these are dumb idols, yea, when we see that they turn the whole truth of God into falsehood, how can this barbarity be suffered? God is excluded, and the devil himself in the persons of men adulterates the whole worship of God, perverts, demolishes, and even reduces to nothing the whole of religion! and he also fills with lies the Church, which ought to be the sanctuary of truth!

These things might have been more fully handled; but it is enough briefly to show how foolishly the Papal clergy boast that they possess the honor of the priesthood, when yet it is evident that there is no right, no authority, when faith is not kept with God and with his Church. Let us now proceeds

<390210> MALACHI 2:10

10. Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?

10. Annon Pater unus omnibus nobis? annon Deus unus creavit nos? cur fraudabimus quisque fratrem suum? (alii, cur trasngredietur quisque in fratrem suum; alii passive accipiunt, cur decipitur quisque a fratre suo) ad polluendum foedus patrum nostrorum.

The Prophet accuses the Jews here of another crime — that they were perfidious towards God and their own brethren, and departed from that pre-eminence into which God had raised them, when they were chosen in preference to other nations to be a holy and peculiar people. This ingratitude the Prophet now condemns by saying, that they *all had one father, and that they had been all created by one God.*

The word *Father* may be applied to God as well as to Abraham, and some interpreters will have it repeated, which is no uncommon thing in Hebrew: they say then that all had God as their Father, because he created them all; so that the latter clause is taken as an explanation. But it is better, as I think, to apply the word to Abraham, and the passage requires this; for it follows at the end of the verse, that the covenant which the Lord had made with their fathers had been violated; and this will appear still more certain, when we bear in mind the design of the Prophet. ^{f25} Presently a reproof follows, because they had taken many wives; but the Prophet seems not as yet to mention this vice, but speaks generally, that they did not preserve that purity to which they had been called, for they indiscriminately married heathen wives. As then they mingled without distinction with unbelievers and the despisers of God, the Prophet complains that they were unmindful of that dignity to which they had been elevated, when God deigned to adopt them as his holy people. For thus it happened, that the pre-eminence which Moses celebrates in <050408> Deuteronomy 4:8, disappeared, “What nation is so renowned, to whom God draws nigh, as thou seest that he is nigh to thee?” When therefore the Jews rendered themselves vile, the Prophet condemns them for ingratitude. He, at the same time, shows that they were become inhuman towards their brethren, with whom they had been united by a most sacred bond. It then seems

probable to me, that God and Abraham are mentioned here, because God had chosen the race of Abraham and adopted them as his people, and also, because he had deposited his covenant with Abraham and the fathers: thus Abraham became, as it were, the mediator of the covenant which God made with his whole race. By thus understanding the subject of the Prophet, it is easier for us to see why he mentions Abraham as well as God.

Is there not one father, he says, *to us all?* that is, “Did not God select us from the rest of the world, when he promised to our father Abraham to be a God to him and to his seed? Since then God’s favor has flowed to us from that fountain, what sottishness it is to break that sacred bond by which God has joined us to himself in the person of Abraham?” For when the Jews did not consider that they derived their origin from the holy patriarch, the consequence was, that the covenant of God with them became void and of no effect. This then is the reason why he says, that one God was to them all a Father. And as other nations might have claimed the same privilege, he adds, *Has not one God created us?* He shows that the Jews had descended in no common or ordinary way from their holy father Abraham, but that God was the maker of his race, that he created them. Did not he also create the rest of the world? Not in the same manner; for this creation ought to be confined especially to the Church. God has created the whole human race; but he created also the race of Abraham: and hence the Church is often called in Isaiah the work and the formation of God, (^{<236621>} Isaiah 66:21,) and Paul also adopts the same mode of speaking, (^{<490210>} Ephesians 2:10.) Our Prophet then does not mean that the Jews had been created by God when born into this world, but that they had become his holy and peculiar people. As then God had thus created the Jews, and had given to them one father, that being mindful of their origin they might remain united in true religion, the Prophet here reprobates their sottishness in casting away from themselves this invaluable favor of God.

Every one dealt falsely with his brother; and thus they violated the covenant of the fathers. As to the verb, נִבְגַּד, *nubgad*, it has been variously explained by grammarians; but as to what is meant it is agreed, that the Jews are here condemned, because they were not only perfidious to God, but also fraudulent as to their neighbors: and thus they doubled their perfidy, the proof which was manifest, because they did not act with

sincerity towards their brethren. ^{f26} *Why then, he says, do we deal falsely with man, that is, every one with his own brother, so that we pollute the covenant of our fathers?* Here the covenant of the fathers is to be taken for that separation or laying apart which we have mentioned, by which God had adopted Abraham and his posterity, that they might be separated from all the nations of the world. Hence under this covenant of the fathers is God himself included; and as this has not been perceived, it is no wonder that this passage has been so frigidly explained, and that Malachi has been as it were wholly buried in darkness; though interpreters have tried to bring light, yet the effect has been to pervert the real meaning of the Prophet. But it appears now plain, I think, that the Jews are here said to be guilty of a twofold perfidy — because they rejected the honor offered to them by God’s gratuitous election, and also because they acted fraudulently towards their own brethren. It hence followed that the covenant of the fathers, that is, what God had deposited with the patriarchs, that it might come from hand to hand to their posterity, had been violated and made void by their wickedness.

We must yet notice what I have already referred to — that the priests are so reprov’d that the whole people are also included; and this we shall again presently see, and I add also, that the Prophet connects God with Abraham, in order to show that we shall fail to seek God effectually, if we seek him apart from his covenant, and also that our minds ought not to be fixed on men. There are indeed two vices against which we ought carefully to guard. Some, passing by all means, seek to fly upward to God; and so they entertain many vain thoughts and devise for themselves many labyrinths, from which they never emerge. We see how many fanatics there are at this day, who proudly speak against God’s word, and yet touch neither heaven nor earth; and why? because they would be superior to angels, and do not acknowledge that they need any helps by which they might by degrees, according to their weakness, ascend up to God himself. Now this is to seek God without the covenant or without the word. This is the reason why the Prophet here unites father Abraham to God himself; it was done that the Jews might know that they were confined by certain limits, in order that they might in humility make progress in God’s school, and be carried by degrees into heaven: for God, as it has been said, had deposited his covenant with Abraham. But yet as they might have depended on a mortal man, the Prophet adds a corrective — that they had

been *created by God*; for they were not to separate their father Abraham from the very author of the covenant.

This passage then is worthy of special notice; for men from the beginning and in all ages have been inclined to the two vices which I have mentioned; and at this day we see that some indulge their dreams and despise the outward preaching of the word; for many fanatics say, that there is no need of rudiments or of the first elements, since God has promised that the sons of the Church would be spiritual. Hence Satan by such delusions strives to draw us away from pure simplicity of doctrine. It is therefore necessary to set up this shield — that God is not exhibited to us without Abraham, that is, without a Prophet and an interpreter. The Papists are also sunk in the same mud; for they have always the fathers in their mouths, but make no account of God. This is also very preposterous. Let us then remember that God is not to be separated from his word, and that the authority of men is of no account, when they depart from it. And the Prophet confirms the same thing at the end of the verse, when he speaks of the covenant of the fathers; for he does not here simply commend the covenant of the fathers, as the Turks might do, or as it is done by Papists and Jews; but he means the covenant which God had given, and which the holy patriarchs faithfully handed down to their posterity, according to what Paul says in the twenty-second chapter of the Acts, when speaking of his father's religion; he did not speak of it as heathens might do of their religion, but he took it as granted that the law promulgated by Moses was not his invention, but had God as its author. It now follows-

<390211> **MALACHI 2:11**

11. Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.

11. Perfide egit Iehudah, et abominatio facta est in Israele et Ierusalem; quia polluit Iehudah sanctuarium Iehovae quod dilexit (vel, sanctitatem; dicemus de hac voce) et matrimonium contraxerunt cum filia dei alieni.

The Prophet now explains how the Jews departed from the covenant of their fathers, and he exaggerates their sin and says, that abomination was

done in Israel; as though he had said, that this perfidy was abominable. Some render the verb, **בגד**, *begad*,^{f27} transgressed, and so it is often taken in Hebrew: but as in the last verse the Prophet had said, **נבגד**, *nubegad*, “Why do we deal perfidiously every one with his brother?” I doubt not but that it is repeated here in the same sense. But as I have already stated, he shows the crime to be detestable, and says that it existed in *Judah and in Jerusalem*. God had indeed, as it is well known, preferred that tribe to others; and it was not a common favor that the Jews almost alone returned to their own country, while others nearly all remained in their dispersions. He adds *Jerusalem*, not for honor’s sake, but for greater reproach, as though he had said, that not only some of the race of Abraham were subject to this condemnation, but that even the Jews were so, who had been allowed to return to their own country, and that even the holy city rendered itself subject to this reproof, in which the temple was, the sanctuary of God, which was then alone the true one in the whole world. By these circumstances then does the Prophet enhance their crime.

But he immediately comes to particulars: *Polluted*, he says, *has Judah the holiness of Jehovah, which he loved*;^{f28} that is, because they individually indulged their lusts, and procured for themselves wives from heathen nations.

Some take, **קדש**, *kodash*, for the sanctuary or the temple; others for the keeping of the law; but I prefer to apply it to the covenant itself; and we might suitably take it in a collective sense, except the simpler meaning be more approved — that Judah polluted his separation. As to the Prophet’s object and the subject itself, he charges them here, I have no doubt, with profanation, because the Jews rendered themselves vile, though God had consecrated them to himself. They had then *polluted holiness*, even when they had been separated from the world; for they had disregarded so great an honor, by which they might have been pre-eminent, had they continued in their integrity. It may be also taken collectively, *they have polluted holiness*, that is, they have polluted that nation which has been separated from other nations: but as this exposition may seem hard and somewhat strained, I am inclined to think that what is here meant is that separation by which the Jews were known from other nations. But yet what I have stated may serve to remove whatever obscurity there may be. And that this holiness ought to be referred to that gratuitous election by which God

had adopted the Jews as his peculiar people, is evident from what the Prophet says, that they married foreign wives. ^{f29}

We then see the purpose of this passage, which is to show, — that the Jews were ungrateful to God, because they mingled with heathen nations, and knowingly and wilfully cast aside that glory by which God had adorned them by choosing them, as Moses says, to be to him a royal priesthood. (<021906> Exodus 19:6.) Holiness, we know, was much recommended to the Jews, in order that they might not abandon themselves to any of the pollutions of the heathens. Hence God had forbidden them under the law to take foreign wives, except they were first purified, as we find in <052111> Deuteronomy 21:11,12; if any one wished to marry a captive, she was to have her head shaven and her nails pared; by which it was intimated, that such women were impure, and that their husbands would be contaminated, except they were first purified. And, yet it was not wholly a blameless thing, when one observed the law as to a captive: but it was a lust abominable to God, when they were not content with their own nation, and burnt in love with strange women. As however the Jews, like all mortals without exception, were inclined to corruptions, God purposed to keep them together as one people, lest the wife by her flatteries should draw the husband away from the pure and legitimate worship of God. And Moses tells us, that there was a crafty counsel given by Balsam when he saw that the people could not be conquered in open war; he at length invented this artifice, that the heathens should offer to them their wives and their daughters. It hence happened that the people provoked God's wrath, as we find it recorded in <042504> Numbers 25:4.

As then the Jews after their return had again lapsed into this corruption, it is not without reason that the Prophet so severely reproveth them, and that he says, that by marrying strange women they had polluted holiness, or that separation, which was their great honor, as God had adopted them alone as his people; and he calls it a holiness which God loved. Thus their crime was doubled, because God had not only bound them to himself, but he had also embraced them gratuitously. For if the cause of the separation be enquired, whether they excelled other nations, or whether they had any worthiness or merit? the answer is, No; but God loved them freely. For by the word love, the Prophet means the mere kindness and bounty of God, with which he favored Abraham and his race, without regard to any worthiness or excellency. He therefore condemns them for this ingratitude,

because they had not only departed from the covenant which the Lord had made with their fathers, but had also neglected and despised that gratuitous love, which ought to have softened even their iron hearts. For if God had found anything in them as a reason why he preferred them to other nations, they might have been more excusable, at least they might have extenuated their fault; but since God had adopted them as his peculiar people, though they were unworthy and wholly undeserving, they must surely have been extremely brutish, to have thus despised the gratuitous favor of God. Their baseness then is increased, as I have said, by this circumstance, — that so great a kindness of God did not turn their hearts to obedience.

At the end of the verse the Prophet makes known, as I have already stated, their profanation; they had married the daughters *of another god*. By way of reproach he calls them the daughters of a strange god. He might have simply said foreign daughters; but he intended here to imply a comparison between the God of Israel and idols: as though he had said, “Whence have these wives come to you? from idols. Ye ought then to have hated them as monsters: had you any religion in your heart, what but detestable to you must have been everything which may have come from idols? but your hearts have become attached to the daughters of false gods.”

And we find that this vice had been condemned by Moses, and branded with reproach, before the giving of the Law, when he said, that the human race had been corrupted, because the sons of God married the daughters of men, (^{<010602>}Genesis 6:2,) even because the posterity of Seth, who were born of the holy family, degraded themselves and polluted that small portion, which was holy and consecrated to God, by mixing with the world; for the whole world had at that time departed from God, except the descendants of Seth. The Lord then had before the Law marked this lust with perpetual disgrace; but when the Law itself which ought to have been like a rampart, again condemned it, was it not a perverseness wholly inexcusable, when the wantonness of the people broke through all restraints? He then adds —

<390212> **MALACHI 2:12**

12. The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the Lord of hosts.

12. Excidet Iehova virum qui fecerit hoc, excitantem et respondentem, ex tabernaculis Iacob, et qui adducit oblationem Iehovae exercituum.

The Prophet here teaches us, that neither the priests nor the people would go unpunished, because they had mingled with the pollutions of the heathens, and profaned and violated the covenant of God. God then says, *Cut off* (the word means to scrape off or to blot out) *shall God the man who has done this, the mover*, or prompter, *as well as the respondent*.^{f30} *Jerome* renders the last words, the master and the disciple; and interpreters vary. Some indeed explain the terms allegorically, and apply them to the dead; but by the mover, I have no doubt, he understands every one who was in power, and could command others, and by the respondent the man who was subject to the authority of his master. The masters then prompted or roused, for it belonged to them to command; and the servants responded, for it was their duty to receive orders and to obey them. It is the same as though the Prophet had said, that God would punish this perfidy, without passing by any, so that he would spare neither the common people nor the chief men: and he also adds the priests, intimating, that the priests themselves would not be excepted.

In short, he denounces punishment on the Jews universally, and shows that however prevalent had this impiety become everywhere, and that though every one thought that whatever was commonly practiced was lawful, yet God would become an avenger, and would include in the same punishment both the masters and the servants, and would not exempt the priests, who considered themselves safe by peculiar privilege. The rest tomorrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are so inclined to all kinds of wickedness, we may learn to confine ourselves within the limits of thy word, and thus restrain all the desires of our flesh; and that

whatever Satan may contrive to draw us here and there, may we continually proceed in obedience to thy word, and being mindful of that eternal election, by which thou hast been pleased gratuitously to adopt us, and also of that calling by which thy eternal election has been confirmed, and by which thou hast received us in thine only-begotten Son, may we go on in our course to the end, and so cleave, by persevering faith, to Christ thy Son, that we may at length be gathered into the enjoyment of that eternal kingdom which he has purchased for us by his blood. — Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SIXTH

<390213> MALACHI 2:13

13. And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand.

13. Et hoc secundo fecistis, operiendo lachrymis altare Iehovae fletu et ploratu, eo quod amplius non respicitur ad oblationem, et non suscipitur beneplacitum e manu vestra.

THE Prophet amplifies again the fault of the priests, because the people, when they perceived that God was adverse to them, found no means of pacifying him. And when men have an idea that God is inexorable to them, every zeal for religion must necessarily decay; and hence it is said in <19D004> Psalm 130:4 — “With thee is propitiation, that thou mayest be feared.” As the people then gained nothing by sacrificing, they had now nearly fallen off from divine worship. This evil, a most grievous one, the Prophet says, was to be justly ascribed to the priests; for as they were become polluted, how could their persons have been accepted by God, that they might be mediators to expiate sins and to pacify God?

This is the real meaning of the Prophet, which none of the interpreters have perceived. The Rabbins think that the priests are here reproved, because their wives filled the altar in the sanctuary with weeping, because they saw that their husbands did not faithfully treat them, according to the law of marriage; and almost all have agreed with them. Thus then they explain the verse — *Ye have in the second place done this*; that is, “That sin was of itself sufficiently grievous, when ye suffered lean victims to be sacrificed to me, as it were in mockery; but in addition to this comes your sin against your wives, who continually complain and deplore their condition before the altar of God, even because they are not loved by you, as the right of marriage requires.” They thus refer the tears, the weeping, and lamentation, to the wives of the priests, which were so cruelly treated by their husbands: they were not able to do anything else than to fill God’s sanctuary with their constant complaints. Hence they render, **עוד פנות**

מֵאֵין, *main oud penut*, “I will not therefore regard,” or, “no one regards;” but both versions are not only obscure, but wholly pervert the sense of the Prophet.

But what I have already stated is the most suitable — that it was to be ascribed to the priests that no one could from the heart worship God, at least with a cheerful and willing mind; for God was implacable to the people, because the only way of obtaining favor under the law was when the priests, who represented the Mediator, humbly entreated pardon in the name of the whole people. But how could God attend to the prayers of the priests when they had polluted his altar by the filth of wickedness? We then see the object of this amplification — *Ye cover the altar of Jehovah with tears, with weeping and wailing*. The praises of God ought to have resounded in the temple, according to what is said —

“Praise, O God, waits for thee in Zion.” (<196501> Psalm 65:1.)

And the principal sacrifice was, that the people exercised themselves in contemplating the blessings of God, and in thanksgiving. But he says that none went forth before the altar with a cheerful mind, but all were sad and sorrowful, because they found that God was severe and rigid.

And the reason is added — מֵאֵין עוֹד פְּנוּת, *main oud penut*, literally, “Is it not any more by regarding,” etc.? It is easy to see how far they depart from the meaning of the Prophet who read — “They shall therefore offer no more;” for is this to be applied to God? Others also, who give this rendering — “I shall not therefore accept,” pervert also the very letter of the text. But the most appropriate meaning is this — that all wept and groaned before the altar, because they saw that they came there without any advantage, that their sacrifices did not please God, and that the whole worship was in vain, inasmuch as God did not answer their prayers. The Prophet ascribes the fault to the priests, that God did not turn to mercy, so as to forgive the people when they sacrificed. With weeping, then, he says, was the altar filled or covered, because God received not *what pleased him from their hand*; that is, because no victims pleased him which were offered by polluted and impure hands. ^{f31} He afterwards joins

14. Yet ye say, Wherefore?
Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

14. Et dixistis, In quo (vel, super quo)? Quoniam Iehova testificatus est inter te et inter uxorem adolescentiae tuae, quam tu fraudasti, (vel, erga quam tu praevaricatus es.) cum tamen ipsa esset consors tua, et uxor foederis tui.

The Prophet tells us here as before how prone the priests were to make a clamor, and it is a very common thing with hypocrites immediately to set up a shield to cover their vices whenever they are reproved; and hence it appears, that men are in a manner fascinated by Satan, when they attain such hardness as to dare to answer God, and with obstreperous words to repel all warnings. Malachi has several times already used this mode of speaking; we may hence conclude, that the people had become then so hardened that warnings were of no account with them. But he mentions one particular, by which it seems evident that they had lapsed into vices which were not to be borne. There is indeed no doubt but that he points out one of the many vices which prevailed. There is then in this verse an instance of stating one thing for the whole, as though he had said, “Your hypocrisy is extremely gross; but, to omit other things, by what pretext can you excuse this perfidy — that there is no conjugal fidelity among you? Were there any integrity and a sense of religion in men, they would surely appear in their conjugal connection; but ye have cast away all shame, and have taken to yourselves many wives. There is then no ground for you to think that you can escape by evasions, because this one glaring vice sufficiently proves your guilt.” This is the import of the Prophet’s answer.

We have indeed seen that the priests were implicated in other vices; the Prophet then does not now charge them with perfidy as though they were free from other sins, but he meant to show, as I have already said, by one thing, how wickedly and shamelessly they sought to evade God’s judgment, though they had violated the marriage pledge, which was wholly to destroy the very order of nature; for there can be, as it has been already

said, no chastity in social life except the bond of marriage be preserved, for marriage, so to speak, is the fountain of mankind.

But in order to press the matter more on the priests, he calls their attention to the fact that God is the founder of marriage. *Testified has Jehovah*, he says, *between thee and thy wife.*^{f32} He intimates in these words, that when a marriage takes place between a man and a woman, God presides and requires a mutual pledge from both. Hence Solomon, in ^{<200217>}Proverbs 2:17, calls marriage the covenant of God, for it is superior to all human contracts. So also Malachi declares, that God is as it were the stipulator, who by his authority joins the man to the woman, and sanctions the alliance: God then has *testified between thee and thy wife*, as though he had said, “Thou hast violated not only all human laws, but also the compact which God himself has consecrated, and which ought justly to be deemed more sacred than all other compacts: as then God has testified between thee and thy wife, and thou now deceivest her, how darest thou to come to the altar? and how canst thou think that God will be pleased with thy sacrifices or regard thy oblations?”

He calls her *the wife of his youth*, because the more filthy is the lust when husbands cast away conjugal love as to those wives whom they have married in their youth. The bond of marriage is indeed in all cases inviolable, even between the old, but it is a circumstance which increases the turpitude of the deed, when any one alienates himself from a wife whom he married when a girl and in the flower of her age: for youth conciliates love; and we also see that when a husband and his wife have lived together for many years, mutual love prevails between them to extreme old age, because their hearts were united together in their youth. It is not then without reason that this circumstance is mentioned, for the lust of the priests was the more filthy and as it were the more monstrous, because they forsook wives whom they ought to have regarded with the tenderest love, as they had married them when they were young: *Thou hast dealt unfaithfully with her, he says, though she was thy consort and the wife of thy covenant.*

He calls her a consort, or companion, or associate,^{f33} because marriage, we know, is contracted on this condition — that the wife is to become as it were the half part of the man. As then the bond of marriage is inseparable, the Prophet here goads the priests, yea, touches them to the quick, when

he reproves them for being unmindful of what was natural, inasmuch as they had blotted out of their minds the memory of a most sacred covenant. The *wife of thy covenant* is to be taken for a covenanted wife, that is, “The wife who has been united to thee by God’s authority, that there might be no separation; but all integrity is violated, and as it were abolished.” He then adds

<390215>MALACHI 2:15	
<p>15. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.</p>	<p>15. Et non unum fecit? et exuperantia spiritus illi? et quorsum unum? quarens semen Dei: ergo custodiamini in spiritu vestro; et in uxorem adolescentiae tuae ne transgrediatur (vel, ne fraudes; est mutatio personae, ponitur enim tertia persona loco secundae)</p>

There is in this verse some obscurity, and hence it has been that no interpreter has come to the meaning of the Prophet. The Rabbins almost all agree that Abraham is spoken of here. Were we to receive this view a two-fold meaning might be given. It may be an objection, — “Has not one done this?” that is, has not Abraham, who is the one father of the nations, given us an example? for he married many wives: and thus many explain the passage, as though the priests raised an objection and defended the corruption just condemned by the example of Abraham, — “Has not one done this while yet an excellency of spirit was in him?” We indeed know how prone men are to pretend the authority of fathers when they wish to cover their own vices.

Others prefer regarding the words as spoken by the Prophet himself, and at the same time say that there is here an anticipation of an objection, and think that an occasion for an excuse is here cut off, as though the Prophet had said, “Did not Abraham, when he was one alone, do this?” For as the Jews might have adduced the example of Abraham, the interpreters, whose opinion I now refer to, think that a difference is here stated, as though he had said, “Ye reason badly, for every one of you is led to polygamy by the

lust of your flesh; but it was far otherwise with Abraham, for he was one, that is, alone;” and in Isaiah Abraham is called one on account of his having no children. The meaning then they think is this, “Was not Abraham forced by necessity to take another wife? even because he had no child and no hope of the promised seed. Lust then did not stimulate your father Abraham, as it does you, but a desire of having an offspring.” And they think, that this view is confirmed by what follows, “And why alone seeking the seed of God?” that is, the object of holy Abraham was far otherwise than to indulge his lust; for he sought that holy seed, the hope of which was taken away from him on account of the barrenness of his wife, and of her great age. When therefore Abraham saw that his wife was barren, and that she could no more conceive on account of her old age, he had recourse to the last remedy: hence the mistake of Abraham might have been excused, since his object was right; for he sought the seed of God, the seed in which all nations were to be blessed. Thus far have I told you what others think.

I thought twelve years ago that this passage ought to have been otherwise rendered in the French Bibles, and that, **אִשָּׁה**, *ached*, ought to be read in the objective case; “Has he not made one?” *Jerome* seems to me to have had a better notion of what the Prophet means than what others have taught; but he could not attain the real meaning, and therefore stopped as it were in the middle of his course. He read the word in the nominative case, “Has not one,” that is, God, “made them?” and then he added, “And in him alone,” that is, Abraham, “was an exuberant spirit.” We see how he dared not to assert anything, nor did he explain what was necessary. The sense is indeed suspended, and is even frigid, if we say, “Has not one made them?” but if we read, “Has he not made one?”^{f34} there is no ambiguity. It is a common thing in Hebrew, we know, that the name of God is often not expressed, when he is referred to; for so great is He, that his name may be easily understood, though not expressed. It ought not therefore to confuse us, that the Prophet withholds the name of God, and mentions a verb without its subject, for such is the usage, as I have said, of the Hebrew language.

I proceed now to explain the meaning of the Prophet. *Has he not made one?* that is, Was not God content with one man, when he instituted marriage? and *yet the residue of the Spirit was in him*. The Rabbins take, **שָׂרָה**, *shar*, as meaning excellence; but I know not what reason have

induced them, except that they ventured to change the sense of the word, because they could not otherwise extricate themselves; for the mistake, that Abraham is spoken of here, had wholly possessed their minds. What then is, **רוח שאר רוח**, *shar ruch*? Excellence of Spirit, say they; but, **שאר**, *shar*, we know, is residue or remnant: what then remains of anything is called, **שאר**, *shar*; for the verb means to remain and to lean. Here then the Prophet takes the residue of the Spirit, so to speak, for overflowing power; for God could have given to one man two or three wives; inasmuch as the Spirit failed him not in forming one woman: as he inspired Eve with life, so also he might have created other women and imparted to them his Spirit. He might then have given two or four or ten women to one man; for there was a spirit remaining in him. We now then understand what the Prophet means at the beginning of this verse.

But before we proceed farther, we must bear in mind his object, which was, to break down all those frivolous pretences by which the Jews sought to cover their perfidy. He says, that in marriage we ought to recognize an ordinance divinely appointed, or, to speak more distinctly, that the institution of marriage is a perpetual law, which it is not right to violate: there is therefore no cause for men to devise for themselves various laws, for God's authority is here to be regarded alone; and this is more clearly explained in ^{<401908>} Matthew 19:8; where Christ, refuting the objection of the Jews as to divorce, says, "From the beginning it was not so." Though the law allowed a bill of divorce to be given to wives, yet Christ denies this to be right, — by what argument? even because the institution was not of that kind; for it was, as it has been said, an inviolable bond. So now our Prophet reasons, *Has not God made one?* that is, "consider within yourselves whether God, when he created man and instituted marriage, gave many wives to one man? By no means. Ye see then that spurious and contrary to the character of a true and pure marriage is everything, that does not harmonize with its first institution."

But some one may ask here, why the Prophet says that God made one? for this seems to refer to the man and not to the woman: to this I answer, that man with the woman is called one, according to what Moses says,

"God created man; male and female created he them,"
 (<010117> Genesis 1:17.)

After having said that man was created, he adds by way of explanation, that man, both male and female, was created. Hence when he speaks of man, the male makes as it were one-half, and the female the other; for when we speak of the whole human race, one-half doubtless consists of men, and the other half of women. So also when we come to individuals, the husband is as it were the half of the man, and the woman is the other half. I speak of the ordinary state of things; for if any one objects and says, that bachelors are not then complete or perfect men, the objection is frivolous: but as men were created, that every one should have his own wife, I say, that husband and wife make but one whole man. This then is the reason why the Prophet says, that one man was made by God; for he united the man to the woman, and intended that they should be partners, so to speak, under one yoke. And in this explanation there is nothing strained; for it is evident that the Prophet here calls the attention of the Jews to the true character of marriage; and this could not have been otherwise known than from the very institution of God, which is, as we have said, a perpetual and inviolable law; for God created man, even male and female: and Christ also has repeated this sentence, and carefully explained it in the passage which we have quoted.

And here the Prophet sharply goads the Jews, as though they wished to overcome God, or to be more wise than he; *Had he not, he says, an exuberance of spirit?* He takes spirit not for wisdom, but for that hidden influence by which God vivifies men. Could not God, he says, have put forth his spirit to create many wives for one man? but his purpose was to create one pair; to make man a husband and a wife: as God then was not without a remaining Spirit, and yet did not exceed this measure; it hence follows, that the law of marriage is violated, when man seeks for himself many wives. The meaning of the Prophet is now, I think, sufficiently clear.

It follows, *And wherefore one*, וְאֶחָד אָמַד, *vame, eached?* The interrogatory particle, מַה, *me*, refers to the cause, end, form, or manner; we may therefore properly render it, For *what*, or wherefore, has God made *one*? even to *seek the seed of God*. The seed of God is to be taken for what is legitimate; for what is excellent is often called God in Hebrew, and also what is free from all vice and blemish. He sought then the seed of God, that is, he instituted marriage, that legitimate and pure offspring might be brought forth. Hence then the Prophet indirectly shows, that all are spurious who proceed from polygamy, because they cannot be deemed

legitimate children; nor ought any to be so counted but those who are born according to God’s institution. When a husband violates his pledged faith to his wife, and takes another; as he subverts the ordinance of marriage, so he cannot be a legitimate father. We now perceive why the Prophet says, that it was God’s purpose to unite only one wife to one man, in order that they might beget legitimate offspring, for he shows by the effect how frivolous were the evasions which the Jews had recourse to; for however they might contend, their very offspring would prove them liars, as it would be spurious.

He then draws this conclusion, Therefore, *watch ye over your spirit*; that is, “Take heed lest any should deceive the wife of his covenant.” After having shown how perversely they violated the marriage vow who rushed into polygamy, he here counsels and exhorts them; and this is the best mode of teaching, to show first what is right and lawful, and then to add exhortations. The Prophet then endeavored first to convince the Jews that they were guilty of a nefarious crime: for otherwise his exhortation would not have been received, as they would have always a ready objection, “It is lawful for us to do so, for we follow the example of our father Abraham; and further, this has been permitted for a long time, and God would have never suffered it, were it wrong, to prevail for so many ages among the people: it hence follows, that thou condemnest what is lawful.” It was necessary, in the first place, to remove all these false pretences: then follows the exhortation in its proper order, Watch over your spirit; for he speaks of what has been, as it were, sufficiently proved.^{f35} It now follows

<390216> MALACHI 2:16

16. For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts; therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

16. Si odio habeas (quisque odio habet,) dimittat (i.e., uxorem) dicit Iehovah Deus Israel; et operit, (vel, textit) violentiam sub vestimento suo, dicit Iehovah exercituum: ergo custodiamini in spiritu vestro et ne fraudetis.

Here again the Prophet exaggerates the crime which the priests regarded as nothing; for he says, that they sinned more grievously than if they had

repudiated their wives. We indeed know that repudiation, properly speaking, had never been allowed by God; for though it was not punished under the law, yet it was not permitted.^{f36} It was the same as with a magistrate, who is constrained to bear many things which he does not approve; for we cannot so deal with mankind as to restrain all vices. It is indeed desirable, that no vice should be tolerated; but we must have a regard to what is possible. Hence Moses has specified no punishment, according to the heinousness of the crime, if one repudiated his wife; and yet it was never permitted.

But if a comparison be made, Malachi says, that it is a lighter crime to dismiss a wife than to marry many wives. We hence learn how abominable polygamy is in the sight of God. I do not consider polygamy to be what the foolish Papists have made it, who call not those polygamists who have many wives at the same time, but those who marry another when the former one is dead. This is gross ignorance. Polygamy, properly so called, is when a person takes many wives, as it was commonly done in the East: and those nations, we know, have always been libidinous, and never observe the marriage vow. As then their lasciviousness was so great that they were like brute beasts, every one married several wives; and this abuse continues at this day among the Turks and the Persian and other nations. Here, however, where God compares polygamy with divorce, he says that polygamy is the worse and more detestable crime; for the husband impurely connects himself with another woman, and then, not only deals unfaithfully with his wife to whom he is bound, but also forcibly detains her: thus his crime is doubled. For if he replies and says that he keeps the wife to whom he is bound, he is yet an adulterer as to the second wife: thus he blends, as they say, holy with profane things; and then to adultery and lasciviousness he adds cruelty, for he holds under his authority a miserable woman, who would prefer death to such a condition; for we know what power jealousy has over women. And when any one introduces a harlot, how can a lawful wife bear such an indignity without being miserably tormented?

This then is the reason why the Prophet now says, *If thou hatest, dismiss*; not that he grants indulgence to divorce, as we have said, but that he might by this circumstance enhance the crime; and hence he adds, *For he covers by a cloak his violence*. Some interpreters take violence here for spoil or prey, and think that the wife is thus called who is tyrannically compelled

to remain with an adulterer, when yet she sees a harlot in her house, by whom she is driven from her conjugal bed: but this is too strained and too remote from the letter of the text. The Prophet here, I doubt not, shakes off from the Jews their false mask, because they thought that they could cover over their vice by retaining their first wives. “What else is this,” he says, “but to cover by a cloak your violence, or at least to excuse it? for ye do not openly manifest it: but God is not deceived, nor can his eye be dazzled by such a disguise: though then your iniquity is covered by a cloak, it is not yet hid from God; nay, it is thus doubled, because ye exercise your cruelty at home; for it would be better for robbers to remain in the wood and there to kill strangers, than to entice guests to their houses and to kill them there and to plunder them under the pretext of hospitality. This is the way in which you act; for ye destroy the bond of marriage, and ye afterwards deceive your miserable wives, and yet ye force them by your tyranny to continue at your houses, and thus ye torment your miserable wives, who might have enjoyed their freedom, if divorce had been granted them.” ^{f37}

He concludes again with these words, *Watch over your spirit*; that is, “Take heed; for this is an intolerable wickedness before God, however you may endeavor to extenuate its heinousness.”

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that though we daily in various ways violate the covenant which thou hast been pleased to make with us in thine only-begotten Son, we may not yet be dealt with according to what our defection, yea, the many defections by which we daily provoke thy wrath against us, do fully deserve; but suffer and bear with us kindly, and at the same time strengthen us that we may persevere in the truth and perform to the end the pledge we have given to thee, and which thou midst require from us in our baptism, and that we may each of us so conduct ourselves towards our brethren, and husbands towards their wives, that we may cherish that unity of spirit which thou hast consecrated between us by the blood of thine own Son. — Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY SEVENTH

<390217> MALACHI 2:17

17. Ye have wearied the Lord with your words: yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?

17. Fatigastis Iehovam in verbis vestris, et dixistis, In quo fatigavimus eum? Quum dicitis, Quicumque facit malum gratus est in oculis Iehovae, et in ipsis se oblectat; vel, Ubi Deus iudicii?

The Prophet here reproves the Jews who expostulated with God in their adversity, as though he had undeservedly forsaken them, and had not brought them immediate help. Thus are hypocrites wont to do; unless God immediately assists them, they not only indirectly complain, but also break out into open blasphemies; for they think that God is bound to them, and hence they assail him more boldly, and even with greater freedom and insolence. It is indeed a proof of true piety when we patiently submit to the judgments of God, and when, as Jeremiah teaches us by his own example,

“we sustain his wrath, because we know that we have sinned.”
(<240314> Jeremiah 3:14.)

But as hypocrites are conscious of nothing wrong, (for they flatter themselves, and stupify their own consciences,) because they examine not themselves, they think that God acts unjustly towards them when he does not immediately bring them aid. Such was the dishonesty of the people of whom the Prophet now speaks.

He says that they had *wearied* God, that is, that they had been troublesome to him by their clamorous complaints; for the verb, **יגע**, *igo*, means to be weary; he says then that they unreasonably complained of God's slowness. It is indeed a mode of speaking taken from men, for we know that no passions belong to God; but as elsewhere God reproves them because they saddened his Spirit, (<19A633> Psalm 106:33,) so he says here that they *wearied* him. We now perceive the Prophet's meaning.

But there is a dilemma presented in the words; for the Jews thought that God favored the wicked, inasmuch as he did not immediately punish them, or that he was now unlike himself, and forgot his own nature. The difficulty or the dilemma appears not at the first view, as they seemed to have repeated the same thing. But in the first clause they accuse God of injustice; and in the second they intimate that there is no God, for he cannot exist without exercising judgment. Then the passages contains two clauses differing from each other — “God has either changed his nature, and so is no God, or he favors our enemies; for he does not immediately execute vengeance.” We see then that they concluded that God either acted unjustly, or that there was no God. But we have mentioned the cause of this blasphemy — the Jews did not examine themselves, and therefore did not confess that they deserved these chastisements. They were like vicious horses, who kick and fling, though gently treated by their riders.

But such insolence is now seen in all masked men, who vauntingly profess religion when they are treated according to their own wishes; but when God deals more sharply with them, they not only murmur, but vomit forth, as I have already said, impious slanders against him, as though he did not render to them the reward due to their just dealings. Admonished by this example, let us learn that it is true wisdom to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, (^{<600506>} 1 Peter 5:6;) and that though he may suspend the granting of our prayers, we ought still to bear, not impatiently, what is hard and severe, and also to subdue our feelings, and to seek from them the Spirit of meekness, to retain us in a tranquil submission.

He says that they still replied — *In what have we wearied thee?*^{f38} Here he strongly reproves their hardness, because they did not become wise through the rebuke given them, but regarded with scorn the words of the Prophet, by which we clearly see that they must have been convinced of their guilt, had they not been doubly stupid. It was an intolerable reproach cast on God, to say that he favored the ungodly, and was pleased with their crimes; for God would thus not only rule as a tyrant, but also subvert all order. But nothing is more contrary to his nature than to hold forth his hand to the ungodly as though he had an alliance with them. As this then was an evident impiety, it was a monstrous stupidity to ask in what they wearied God; they ought indeed to have known that he regards nothing as precious as his own honor; and yet, as though Malachi had unjustly

reproved them, they opposed him with an iron front, according to similar instances which we have before observed; for though they were covenant-breakers as to marriage, though they defrauded God in the tenths, though they cunningly evaded the Prophets, they yet as it were wiped their mouths and asked, In what had they sinned? The Prophet shows that they were become so hardened in their contumacy that they daringly rejected all admonitions; for they did not ask this as though it was a doubtful thing, nor can it be concluded from their words that they were teachable; but it was the same as if they were armed, ready for a contest, yea, armed with effrontery and perverseness; for they no doubt despised and ridiculed the Prophet's reproof.

He then answers them — *When ye say, Whosoever doeth evil is acceptable in the eyes of Jehovah, and in them he delights.* The word rendered “acceptable” is **טוֹב**, *thub*; but such is its meaning often in Hebrew. ^{f39}

What they said was, that the ungodly and the wicked pleased God, even because they covered by false colors their sins, so that they were not convinced of anything wrong. They then imputed whatever was evil to their enemies; they did not commonly expostulate with God because he left sins unpunished, but because they received not his aid. We hence see that the Jews here did not clamor and contend with God through hatred of wickedness, but had only a regard to their own advantages; nor did they condemn the sins of others, except those by which they received some harm or loss, and that they considered none wicked except those by whom they were injured. We hence learn that they did not complain through zeal for what was right, but because they would have God bound to them to undertake their cause like earthly patrons.

We indeed know that even the godly are sometimes wearied, and their faith is ready to fail, when things in the world are in a disturbed and confused state: and this was the case with David, as it is recorded in the seventy-third Psalm; but there is in the servants and sincere worshipers of God some concern for what is just and right, whenever they have such grief and trouble of mind, according to the case of Habakkuk, when he said,

“How long, O Lord!” (<350102> Habakkuk 1:2;)

for no doubt his complaint arose from a right principle, because his desire was that God should be truly served in the world. But there was nothing of this kind in the Jews, with whom our Prophet contends here; for as we

have said, there was no hatred of wickedness, but only a care for their own advantage; they hence said, that the ungodly pleased God, because God did not immediately interpose when they apprehended some trouble from their enemies.

The repetition is a proof of greater bitterness; for they were not content with one clamorous expression, but added, that God took delight in them.

Then follows the other clause, *or where is the God of judgment?*^{f40} They seem not here to reason amiss, that is, from the nature of God. Men may change their counsel and their design, and remain men still, for they are subject to inconstancy and fickleness; but to God there belongs no change. There seems not then to be an impropriety in this — that there is no God, except he be the judge of the world; for he cannot divest himself of his office without denying himself. But they malignantly impeached God; nay, they now insinuate that there is none, because he had abdicated his judgment; for they took it as granted, that God had ceased to be the punisher of wickedness, which was most false; but yet they thought that according to facts it was certain and clear. Hence they concluded that there was no God, as his divinity must have been abolished together with his judgment. We hence see to what extent of insolence they burst forth in their complaints, so that they either charged God with injustice, or alleged that his divinity was annihilated. Now follows

CHAPTER 3

<390301> MALACHI 3:1

1. Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, who ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

1. Ecce ego mitto Angelum meum, et purgabit viam coram facie mea; et mox veniet ad templum suum Dominus, quem vos quaeritis, et Angelo foederis quem vos expetitis; ecce venit, dicit Iehova exercituum.

Here the Prophet does not bring comfort to the wicked slanderers previously mentioned, but asserts the constancy of his faith in opposition to their blasphemous words; as though he had said, “Though they impiously declare that they have been either deceived or forsaken by the God in whom they had hoped, yet his covenant shall not be in vain.” The design of what is announced is like that of the declaration made elsewhere,

“Though men are perfidious and false, yet God remains true, and cannot depart from his own nature.” (<042319> Numbers 23:19.)

God then does here gloriously triumph over the Jews, and alleges his own covenant in opposition to their disgraceful slanders, because their wicked murmurings could not hinder him to accomplish his promises and to perform in due time what they thought would never be done; and he adopts a demonstrative adverb in order to show the certainty of what is said.

Behold, he says, *I send my messenger, who will clear the way before my face.*^{f41} This passage ought doubtless to be understood of John the Baptist, for Christ himself so explains it, than whom no better interpreter can be found; and since John the Baptist was the messenger of Christ, the beginning of the verse can be applied to no other person. Afterwards the Father himself speaks as we shall see: but as he who appeared in the flesh is the same God with the Father, it is no wonder that he speaks, and then that the words which follow are spoken in the person of the Father.

There is here a striking allusion to Moses, whose office it was to intercede, that God might not in his just wrath destroy the whole people; for as then the majesty of God was more than could be borne without an intercessor, so that the people through fear cried out “Speak thou to us lest we die,” (<022019> Exodus 20:19,) so also now does Malachi teach us, that there is need of an intercessor, by whom God’s wrath might be mitigated, which the Jews had extremely provoked. This office John the Baptist undertook, who prepared the Jews to hear the voice of Christ.

By saying that he would *send a messenger to clear his way*, he indirectly reproved the Jews, by whom many hindrances were thrown as it were in the way; as though he had said, “They prevent by the obstacles they raise up the redemption and the promised salvation to be revealed: there will therefore be the need of a *messenger to clear the way*.” For the Jews had introduced impediments, as though they designedly wished to resist the favor which had been prepared and promised to them. But how the Baptist performed his work by clearing the way, is evident from the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, as well as from the Gospels; and hence may be gathered what I have already said — that God by his fidelity and mercy struggled with those obstacles which the Jews had raised up to prevent the coming of Christ.^{f42}

He afterwards adds, *And presently shall^{f43} come to his temple the Lord, whom ye seek*. After having said that he would open a way for his favor, he now adds, *come shall the Lord*. He introduces here, not Jehovah, but the Lord, אָדוֹן, *Adun*; and hence he speaks distinctly of Christ, who is afterwards called the *Angel* or Messenger *of the covenant*. But the word אָדוֹן, *Adun*, commonly used for a Mediator, as in Psalm 110, and also in <270917> Daniel 9:17; where it is expressly said, “Hear, O Jehovah, for the sake of the Lord,” לַמַּעַן אָדוֹנֵי, *lamon Aduni*; the word is the same as here, *come* then *shall the Lord*. The reason for this mode of speaking was, because Christ was shown to them under the type which represented him. As then the kingdom of David was a representation of the kingdom of Christ our Lord, it is no wonder that the Prophets designate him by this title, especially those who were the nearest to the time of Christ’s manifestation. But he is promised by another title, *the angel* or messenger *of the covenant*; but it means not the same here as in the first clause. He called John the Baptist at the beginning of this verse a messenger, *the*

messenger of Jehovah; and now he calls Christ a messenger, but he is the *messenger of the covenant*; ^{f44} for it was necessary that the covenant should be confirmed by him. The title of John the Baptist was then inferior to that of Christ; for though he was God manifested in the flesh, yet this did not prevent him from being God's minister and interpreter in order to confirm his covenant; and we know that the office of Christ consists in confirming and sealing to us the covenant of God, not only by his doctrine, but also by his blood and the sacrifice of his cross.

Malachi then promises here to the Jews both a king and a reconciler, — a king under the title of Lord, — and a reconciler under the title of the messenger of the covenant: and we know it was the main thing in the whole doctrine of the law, that a Redeemer was to come, to reconcile the Church to God and to rule it.

And he says that the Mediator was *sought* and *expected* by the Jews; and through him God was to be propitious to them: but this was not said but ironically. The faithful indeed at this day have all their desires fixed on Christ, after he has been revealed in the flesh, until they shall partake at his last coming of the fruit of his death and resurrection; and under the law we know that the groaning and the sighings of the godly were towards Christ: but Malachi here, by way of contempt, checks these unreasonable charges, by which the Jews accused God, as though he had disappointed their hope and their prayers. For we have said, and the fact is evident, that God had been presumptuously and shamefully impeached by them, as though he meant not to fulfill his promises: hence the Prophet says ironically, and sharply too, that Christ was expected by the Jews, for they murmured, because God had too long deferred his coming: "O! where is the Redeemer? when will he be revealed to us?" Since then they thus pretended that they earnestly expected the coming of Christ, the Prophet upbraids them with this, and justly too, for they had expressly manifested their unbelief.

Behold, he comes, saith Jehovah of hosts. ^{f45} Here he introduces the Father as the speaker, as it has been already stated; and the particle **הנה**, *ene*, behold, is used for the sake of removing every doubt; and then he confirms what he says by the authority of God. He might have asserted this in his own person as a teacher; but in order to produce an effect on the Jews by the majesty of God, he makes him the author of this prophecy. It follows

<390302> MALACHI 3:2

2. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap.

2. Et quis sustinebit diem adventus ejus? et quis consistet in apparitione ejus? quia ipse quasi ignis purgans, et quasi borith (vel, herba) fullonum.

The Prophet in this verse contends more sharply with the Jews, and shows that it was a mere presence that they so much expected the coming of the Mediator, for they were far different from him through the whole course of their life. And when he says that the coming of Christ would be intolerable, what is said is to be confined to the ungodly; for we know that nothing is more delightful and sweeter to us than when Christ is nigh us: though now we are pilgrims and at a distance from him, yet his invisible presence is our chief joy and happiness. (<450822> Romans 8:22, 23.)

Besides, were not the expectation of his coming to sustain our minds, how miserable would be our condition! It is therefore by this mark that the faithful are to be distinguished, — that they expect his coming; and Paul does not in vain exhort us, by the example of heaven and earth, to be like those in travail, until Christ appears to us as our Redeemer.

But the Prophet here directs his discourse to the ungodly, who though they seem to burn with desire for God's presence, do not yet wish him to be nigh them, but they flee from him as much as they can. We have met with a similar passage in Amos,

“Wo to those who desire the day of the Lord! What will it be to you? for it will be darkness, yea darkness and not light, a day of sorrow and not of joy.” (<300518> Amos 5:18.)

Amos in this passage spoke on the same subject; for the Jews, inflated with false confidence, thought that God could not forsake them, as he had pledged his faith to them; but he reminded them that God had been so provoked by their sins, that he was become their professed and sworn enemy. So also in this place, *Come*, the Prophet says, *come shall the Redeemer*; but this will avail you nothing; on the contrary, his coming will be dreadful to you. We indeed know that Christ appeared not for salvation to all, but only to the remnant, and to those of Jacob who repented,

according to what Isaiah says. (<²³¹⁰²¹> Isaiah 10:21, 22.) But since they obstinately rejected the favor of God, it is no wonder that the Prophet excluded them from the blessings of the Redeemer.

Who then will endure his coming?^{f46} *and who shall stand at his appearance?* as though he had said, “In vain do ye flatter yourselves, and even upbraid God, that he retains the promised Redeemer as it were hidden in his own bosom; for he will come in due time, but without any advantage to you; nor will it be given you to enjoy his favor; but on the contrary he will bring to you nothing but terrors; for *he will be like a purifying fire, and as the herb of the fullers.*^{f47} The latter clause may be taken in a good or a bad sense, as it is evident from the next verse. The power of the fire, we know, is twofold; for it burns and it purifies; it burns what is corrupt; but it purifies gold and silver from their dross. The Prophet no doubt meant to include both, for in the next verse he says, that Christ will be as fire to purify and to refine the sons of Levi as gold and silver. With regard then to the people of whom he has been hitherto speaking, he shows that Christ will be like fire, to burn and consume their filth; for though they boasted with their mouth of their religion, yet we know that the Church of God had many defilements and pollutions; they were therefore to perish by fire. But Malachi teaches us at the same time, that the whole Church was not to perish, for the Lord would *purify the sons of Levi.*

There is here a part stated for the whole; for the promise belongs to the whole Church. The sons of Levi were the first-fruits, and the whole people were in the name of that tribe consecrated to God. This is the reason why he mentions the sons of Levi rather than the whole people; as though he had said, that though the Church was corrupt and polluted, there would yet be a residue which God would save, having purified them. The words which I had omitted are these -

3. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

3. Et sedebit purgans et mundans argentum; et mundabit filios Levi, fundetque (vel, conflabit) eos sicut aurum et sicut argentum; et erunt offerentes Iehovae oblationem in iustitia.

The Prophet says, that Christ would *sit to purify the sons of Levi*; for though they were the flower, as it were, and the purity of the Church, they had yet contracted some contagion from the corruption which prevailed. Such then was the contagion, that not only the common people became corrupt, but even the Levites themselves, who ought to have been guides to others, and who were to be in the Church as it were the pattern of holiness. God however promises that such would be the purifying which Christ would effect, and so regulated, that it would consume the whole people, and yet purify the elect, and purify them like silver, that they may be saved. He tells us afterwards that the Levites themselves would need a trial to cleanse them; for they themselves would not be without filth, because they had mixed with a perverse people, who had wholly departed from the law, and from the fear and the worship of God.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since we are by nature so prone to rash judgement, we may learn to submit to thee, and so quietly to acquiesce in thy judgements, that we may patiently bear whatever chastisements thou mayest daily allot to us, and not doubt but that all is done for our well-being, and never murmur against thee, but give thee the glory in all our adversities; and may we so labor to mortify our flesh, that by denying ourselves we may ever allow thee to be the only true God, and a just avenger, and our Father, and that thus renouncing ourselves, we may yet never depart from the purity of thy word, and be thus retained under thy yoke, until we shall at length attain that liberty which has been procured for us by thine only-begotten Son. — Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-EIGHTH

IN our last lecture the Prophet delineated the office of Christ, that hypocrites might know that they in vain complained of the tardiness of God, as though he had deserted them at the very time of their extremity. He further said, that there was need of purifying, not only as to the people, but as to the priests also; and hence it appears how corrupt the state of things had become among all classes. At the same time he seems indirectly to reprove hypocrisy, not only in the common people, but also in the Levites, for there is a contrast to be understood between the sacrifices they then offered, and those offered by their fathers.

By saying then that they would *offer to Jehovah an oblation in righteousness*, מְנַחָה בְּצִדְקָה, *meneche betsadke*, he intimates that their sacrifices had not been legitimate, for they had become polluted, and hence could not rightly minister to God. We hence see that the Levites are here reproved because they had polluted God's service in not offering the right sacrifices such as he had prescribed in his law. This is not to be applied to the outward acts only, but also to the feelings and motives, because they did come to God's altars with minds well prepared.

To offer in righteousness is a mode of speaking common in Hebrew, and means to offer in a right way, so that there should be nothing wrong or worthy of blame. By the verb יָשַׁב, *isheb*, to sit, is intimated continuance; as though the Prophet had said, that corruption was so deeply fixed in the Levites that it could not in one day or by light means be purged away: in short, he meant by this one word to exaggerate the corrupt state of the people, for had only a slight washing been sufficient, he would have simply said, "he will purify, he will cleanse, he will cast," or melt,^{f48} for he uses these three words: but he says, as I have stated, that he will sit to do these things, in order to show that he would continue in his work and carry it on for a long time, because the diseases being so inveterate they could not be easily healed. We now understand what the Prophet means. He afterwards adds —

<390304> MALACHI 3:4

4. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

4. Et gratia erit Iehovae oblatio Iehudah et Ierusalem, sicut a diebus antiquis et sicut annis pristinis.

This verse shows, that though he had just spoken of the sons of Levi, he yet had regard to the whole people. But he meant to confine to the elect what ought not to have been extended to all, for there were among the people, as we have seen and shall again presently see, many who were reprobates, nay, the greater part had fallen away; and this is the reason why the Prophet especially addresses the few remaining who had not fallen away.

But he names *Judah and Jerusalem*, for that tribe had returned to their own country, and sacrifices were offered at Jerusalem, though not with the splendor of ancient times, the state of things having become much deteriorated among those miserable exiles. Hence the Prophet, that he might encourage the faithful, says, that though the temple was then mean, and the worship of God as then performed was unadorned and abject, yet there was no reason for the Levites or for others to despond, because the Lord would again restore the glory of his temple, and really show that what men viewed with scorn was approved by him. It follows —

<390305> MALACHI 3:5

5. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

5. Et appropinquabo ad vos in iudicium, et ero testis velox contra praestigiatos, (vel, divinos) et adulteros, et jurantes ad fallendum, et supprimentes mercedem mercenarii, viduae, et pupilli, (aut, viduam et pupillum,) et pervertentes peregrinum, et qui non timuerunt me, dicit Iehova.

Here the Prophet retorts the complaints which the Jews had previously made. There is here then a counter-movement when he says, *I will draw nigh to you*; for they provoked God by this slander — that he hid himself from them and looked at a distance on what was taking place in the world, as though the people he had chosen were not the objects of his care. They expected God to be to them like a hired soldier, ready at hand to help them in any adversity, and to come armed at their nod or pleasure to fight with their enemies: this they expected; but God declares what is of a contrary character, — that he would come for *judgment*; and he alludes to that impious slander, when they denied that he was the God of judgement, because he did not immediately, or soon enough, resist their enemies: “Oh! God has now divested himself of his own nature! for his judgement does not appear.” His answer is, “I will not forget nay judgement when I come to you, but I shall come in a way contrary to what you expect”. They indeed wished God to put on arms for their advantage, but God declares, that he would be an enemy to them, according to what he also says by the mouth of Isaiah.

He further says, *I will be a swift witness*. He sets swiftness here in opposition to their calumny, for they said that God was slow and tardy, because he had not immediately, as they had wished, come forth to exercise vengeance on foreign nations: he, on the other hand, says, that he would be sufficiently swift when the time came.

And as there are the like blasphemies prevailing in the world at this day, this passage may be accommodated to our circumstances. Let us then know, that though God may delay and connive at things for a time, he yet knows his own opportunities, so as to appear as the avenger of wickedness as soon as it will be necessary. But let us ever fear lest our haste should prove our ruin, for he has no respect of persons, so as to favor our unfaithfulness and to be rigid towards those who are hostile to us. Let us take heed that while we look for the presence of God, we present ourselves before his tribunal with a pure and upright conscience.

He then mentions several kinds of evils, in which he includes the sins in which the Jews implicated themselves. He first names *diviners* or sorcerers. It is indeed true, that among various kinds of superstitions this was one; but as the word is found here by itself, the Prophet no doubt meant to include all kinds of diviners, soothsayers, false prophets, and all

such deceivers: and so there is here again another instance of stating a part for the whole; for he includes all those corruptions which are contrary to the true worship of God. We indeed know that God formerly had by his word put a restraint on the Jews, that they were not to turn aside to incantations and magical arts, or to anything of this kind; but he intimates here, that they were then so given up to gross abominations, that they abandoned themselves to magic arts, and to incantations, and the juggleries of the devil. He mentions, in the second place, *adulterers*, and under this term he includes all kinds of lewdness; and, in the third place, he names *frauds* ^{f49} and *rapines*; and if we rightly consider the subject, we shall find that these three things contain whatever violates the whole law.

The design of the Prophet is by no means ambiguous; for he intended to show how perversely they expostulated with God; for they ought to have been destroyed a hundred times, inasmuch as they were apostates, were given to obscene lusts, were cruel, avaricious, and perfidious.

And this reproof ought to be a warning to us in the present day, that we may not call forth God's judgement on others, while we flatter ourselves as being innocent. Whenever then we flee to God for help, and ask him to succor us, let us remember that he is a just judge who has no respect of persons. Let then every one, who implores God's judgement, be his own judge, and anticipate the correction which he has reason to fear. That God therefore may not be armed for our destruction, let us carefully examine our own life, and follow the rule prescribed here by the Prophet; let us begin with the worship of God, then let us come to fornications and adulteries, and whatever is contrary to a chaste conduct, and afterwards let us pass to frauds and plunder; for if we are free from all superstition, if we keep ourselves chaste and pure, and if we also abstain from all plunders and all cruelty, our life is doubtless approved by God. And hence it is that the Prophet adds at the end of the verse, *They feared not me*; for when lusts, and plunder, and frauds and the corruptions which vitiate God's worship, prevail, it is evident that there is no fear of God, but that men, having shaken off the yoke, as it were run mad, though they may a thousand times profess the name of God.

By mentioning the *orphan*, *the widow*, and *the stranger*, he amplifies the atrocity of their crimes; for the orphans, widows, and strangers, we know, are under the guardianship and protection of God, inasmuch as they are

exposed to the wrongs of men. Hence every one who plunders orphans, or harasses widows, or oppresses strangers, seems to carry on open war, as it were, with God himself, who has promised that these should be safe under the shadow of his hand. With regard to the expressions, it seems not suitable to say that the hire of the widow and of the orphan is suppressed; there may therefore be an inversion of the words ^{f50} — they oppressed the widows, the orphans, strangers. It follows —

<390306> **MALACHI 3:6**

6. For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

6. Quia ego Jehova, non mutō (alii vertunt, non mutor, et ad rem ipsam parum interest;) et vos filii Jacob non estis consumpti.

Here the Prophet more clearly reproveth and checks the impious waywardness of the people; for God, after having said that he would come and send a Redeemer, though not such as would satisfy the Jews, now claims to himself what justly belongs to him, and says that he changes not, because he is God. Under the name Jehovah, God reasons from his own nature; for he sets himself, as we have observed in our last lecture, in opposition to mortals; nor is it a wonder that God here disclaims all inconsistency, since the impostor Balaam was constrained to celebrate God's immutable constancy —

“For he is not God,” he says, “who changes,” or varies, “like man.”
(^{<042319>} Numbers 23:19.)

We now then understand the force of the words, *I am Jehovah*. But he adds as an explanation, *I change not*, or, I am not changed; for if we do not take the verb actively, the meaning is the same, — that God continues in his purpose, and is not turned here and there like men who repent of a purpose they have formed, because what they had not thought of comes to their mind, or because they wish undone what they have performed, and seek new ways by which they may retrace their steps. God denies that anything of this kind can take place in him, for he is *Jehovah*, and *changes not*, or is not changed.

The latter clause is variously explained. The verb בָּלָה, *cale*, means, in the first conjugation, to be consumed; but in Piel, to complete, or to make an end; and this sense would be very suitable; but a grammatical reason interferes, for it is in the first conjugation. Did grammar allow, this meaning would be appropriate, “Ye children of Israel have not made an end:” Why? “From the days of your fathers,” etc.: then the verse which follows would be connected with this. But we must be content with the present reading; and a twofold view may be taken of it: the copulative “waw” may be taken as an adversative, “Though ye are not consumed, I yet am not changed:” as though it was said, “Think not that you have escaped, though I have long spared you and your sins: though then ye are not yet consumed, as I have borne with you in your great wickedness, I yet continue to be Jehovah, nor do I change my nature, and ye shall at length find that I am a just Judge; though I shall not soon execute my vengeance, punishment being held suspended, or as it were buried, yet the end will show that I am not changed.”^{f51}

But the Prophet seems rather to accuse the Jews of ingratitude in charging God with cruelty or with negligence, because he did not immediately assist them; and at the same time they did not consider within themselves that they remained alive because God had a reason derived from his own nature for sparing them, and for not rendering to them what they had deserved. The meaning then is this, “I am God, and I change not; and ought ye not to have acknowledged that wonderful forbearance through which I have spared you? for how has it been that you have not perished, and that innumerable deaths have not swallowed you up? How is it that you are yet alive? Is it because you have dealt faithfully with me, so that it behaved me to exercise care over you? Nay, it is indeed a wonder that I had not fulminated against you so as to destroy you long ago.” We hence see that he upbraids them with ingratitude for accusing him, because he did not immediately come forth in their defense: For he answers them and says, that had he been rigid and vehement in his displeasure, they could not have continued, for they had not ceased for many successive ages to seek their own ruin, as we find in what follows, for he says —

<390307> **MALACHI 3:7, 8**

7. Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

7. A diebus patrum vestrorum declinastis a statutis meis (vel, edictis,) et non servastis: Revertimini ad me, et revertar ad vos, dicit Iehova exercituum; et dixistis, In quo revertemur?

8. Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

8. An diripiet homo Deum (vel, deos, vel, Iudices,) quia vos diripuistis me? et dixistis, In quo diripuimus te (vel, expilavimus)? In decimis et oblationibus.

The Prophet expands more fully what he had referred to — that it was a wonder that the Jews had not perished, because they had never ceased to provoke God against themselves. He then sets this fact before them more clearly, *From the days* ^{f52} *of your fathers*, he says, *ye have turned aside from my statutes*. He increases their condemnation by this circumstance — that they had not lately begun to depart from the right way, but had continued their contumacy for many ages, according to what the apostles, as well as the Prophets in various places, have testified:

“Ye uncircumcised in heart, ye have ceased not to resist the Holy Spirit like your fathers.” (<440706> Acts 7:61.)

“Harden not your hearts as your fathers did; in the righteousness of your fathers walk not.” (<199508> Psalm 95:8.)

But I will not multiply proofs, which very often are to be met with, and must be well known.

We now understand the Prophet’s intention — that the Jews for many ages had been notorious for their impiety and wickedness, and that they had not been dealt with by God as they had deserved, because he had according to his ineffable goodness and forbearance suspended his rigour, so as not to visit them according to their demerits. It hence appears how unreasonable they were, not only in being morose and proud, but especially in being furious against God, when they accused him of

tardiness, while yet he had proved himself to be really a God towards them by his continued forbearance.

The words, *And ye have not kept them*, are added for amplification; for he expresses more fully their contempt of his law, as though he had said, that they were not only transgressors, but had also with gross wilfulness so departed from the law as to regard it as nothing to tread God's precepts under their feet.

He then exhorts them to repentance, and kindly addresses them, and declares that he would be propitious and reconcilable to them, if they repented. He has hitherto sharply reproved them, because their necks being hard they had need of such correction; for had the Prophet gently and kindly exhorted them, they would either have kicked or have set on him with their horns; he now mitigates his sharpness, not indeed with respect to all, but if there were any healable among the people he meant to try them; and hence he offers them reconciliation with God, as though he had said, "Though God has been in various ways wantonly offended by you, and though you have repudiated his favor, and have become wholly unworthy of being regarded by him, yet return, and he will meet you."

We have said elsewhere that all exhortations would be in vain without a hope of pardon; for when God commands us to return to the right way, our hearts would never be touched, nay, they would on the contrary turn away, had we no hope that he would be reconciled to us. This course the Prophet now pursues, when in the person of God himself he promises pardon, provided the Jews repented.

God is said to *return* to us, when he ceases to demand the punishment of our sins, and when he lays aside the character of a judge, and makes himself known to us as a Father. We indeed know that God neither returns nor departs; for he who fills all places never moves here and there; and we also know that we exist and live in him, but he shows by outward evidences that he is alienated from us, and by the same he shows that he is propitious to us; for when he favors us with fruitful seasons, with peace and with other blessings, he is said to be near us; but when he lets loose the reins of his wrath, or exposes us to the assaults of Satan and to the wanton power of men, he is said to be far removed from us. But this is so well known that I need not dwell longer on the point.

The promise which the Prophet states serves to show, that God would manifest tokens of his paternal favor to the Jews, provided only they were submissive; but that it would be their own fault, if they did not find through his blessings that he was their Father. It would be on account of their sins, which, as Isaiah says, hinder the course of that beneficence to which he is of his own self inclined, (^{<235902>}Isaiah 59:2.) And he bids them to *return*. Hence the Papists very foolishly conclude, that repentance is in the power of man's free-will. But God requires what is above our strength; and yet there is no reason why we should complain that there is a too heavy burden laid on us; for he regards not what we can, or what our ability admits, but what we owe to him and what our duty requires. Though then no one can of his own self turn to God, he is not on this account excusable, because we must consider whence comes the defect; and how much soever, as I have already said, a man may pretend his own impotency, he cannot yet escape from being bound to God, though more is required of him than he of himself can perform. But this subject has often been discussed elsewhere. The import of what is said here is, — that men are not miserable through the unjust rigour of God, but always through their own sins.

It follows, *Ye have said, In what shall we return?* It is an evidence of perverseness, when men answer that they see not that they have erred, and that hence conversion is to no purpose required of them; for this is the meaning of these words, *Whereby shall we return?* that is, “What dost thou require from us? for we are not conscious of any defection; we worship God as we ought: now if our duties are repudiated by him, we see not why he should so expressly blame us; let him show in what we have offended; for conversion to him is superfluous, until we be proved guilty of apostasy, or of those sins which God determines to punish in us.” To this the Prophet answers —

Will a man defraud the gods? Some give this version, “Will a man defraud God?” But it is strained and remote from the Prophet's design; and they pervert the meaning. For I do not see what can be elicited from this rendering, “Will a man defraud God?” But there are other two meanings which may be taken. The first is, “Will a man defraud his gods?” The word אלהים, *Aleim*, though it be in the plural number, is applied, as it is well known, to the true God; but it is applied also to idols; and in this place the Prophet seems to me to compare the Jews to the Gentiles, that their

impiety might be made more evident. The same is the object of Jeremiah, when he says,

“Go, and survey the islands, is there a nation which has changed its gods, while yet they are no gods.” (<240210> Jeremiah 2:10.)

Since their blindness and obstinacy held fast the Gentiles in darkness, that they continued to worship the gods to whom they had been accustomed, it was an abominable wickedness in the Jews, that having been taught to worship the true God, they were yet continually influenced by ungodly levity, and sought new modes of worship, as though they wished to devise another god for themselves. So also in this place the Prophet seems to bring forward the Gentiles as an example to the Jews; for they discharged their duty towards their gods; but the Jews despised the supreme and the only true God: “Behold,” he says, “go round the world, and ye shall not find among the nations so unbridled a liberty as prevails among you; for they render obedience to their gods, and sacrilege is abominable to them; but ye defraud me. Am I inferior to idols? or is my state worse than theirs?”

Some take the word אלהים, *Aleim*, for judges, as judges are sometimes so named; but this meaning seems not suitable on account of the word, Adam. As then this word generally means man, the Prophet, I have no doubt, intimates what I have stated, — that unbelievers, though sunk in darkness, are yet restrained by reverence and fear from changing their deity, and that they dare not to show levity when the name only of their god is pronounced. Since then such humility prevailed among unbelievers, could the impiety of that people, who had been trained up in the law, be excusable? a people too, upon whom God had ever made the doctrine of the law to shine.^{f53}

He afterwards adds, *Because ye have defrauded me; and ye have said, Thereby have we defrauded thee? In tenths and in oblations.*^{f54} Here the Prophet again proves the people guilty of perverseness: it was indeed hypocrisy, and though gross, it was yet surpassed by impudence; for they asked, whereby they had defrauded God? and yet this was evident even to children: for we know, and we have seen elsewhere, that avarice so ruled among them, that every one, bent on their own profit, neglected the temple and the priests. Since then they were openly sacrilegious, how shameless they must have been to ask whereby they had defrauded God! The thing

itself was indeed manifest and commonly known, so that children could see it. God however deemed it enough to convict them by one sentence, — that they defrauded him in the tenths and in the first-fruits; not that any advantage accrued to him from oblations, as he had no need of any such things; but he rightly calls and counts that his own which he had appointed for his own service. Since then he had instituted that order among the Jews, that they might by the tenths support the priests, and a part also was required for the poor, since God designed the firstfruits and other things to be offered to him, that men might thereby be continually reminded, that all things were his, and that whatever they received from his hand was sacred to him, he had previously called the bread laid on the table his own, and had called the sacrifices his own food, as though he did eat and drink. But as I have already said, we ought to regard the object in view, because his will was to be thus worshipped, and at the same time to keep as his own whatever belonged to his service. This then is the reason why he now complains of being defrauded of the tenths.

But we know that other sacrifices are now prescribed to us; and after prayer and praises, he bids us to relieve the poor and needy. God then, no doubt, is deprived by us of his right, when we are unkind to the poor, and refuse them aid in their necessity. We indeed thereby wrong men, and are cruel; but our crime is still more heinous, inasmuch as we are unfaithful stewards; for God deals more liberally with us than with others, for this end — that some portion of our abundance may come to the poor; and as he consecrates to their use what we abound in, we become guilty of sacrilege whenever we give not to our brethren what God commands us; for we know that he engages to repay, according to what is said in

<201917> Proverbs 19:17, “He who gives to the poor lends to God.”

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast been pleased to choose us as priests to thyself, not that we may offer beasts to thee, but consecrate to thee ourselves, and all that we have, — O grant, that we may with an readiness strive to depart from every kind of uncleanness, and to purify ourselves from all defilements, so that we may duly perform the sacred office of priesthood, and thus conduct ourselves towards thee with chasteness and purity; may we also abstain from every evil work, from all fraud and all cruelty

towards our brethren, and so to deal with one another as to prove through our whole life that thou art really our Father, ruling us by thy Spirit, and that true and holy brotherhood exists between us; and may we live justly towards one another, so as to render to each his own right, and thus show that we are members of thy only-begotten Son, so as to be owned by him when he shall appear for the redemption of his people, and shell gather us into his celestial kingdom. — Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-NINTH

<390309> MALACHI 3:9

9. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

9. Maledictione vos maledicti estis, et me vos diripuistis tota gens.

MALACHI pursues the same subject; for he answers the Jews in the name of God — that they unjustly complained of his rigour as being immoderate, since they themselves were the cause of all their evils. He says that they were cursed, but he adds that this happened to them deservedly, as though he had said — “Be that granted what you say, (for lamentations were continually made,) why is it that God afflicts us without end or limits?” God seems to grant what they were wont reproachfully to declare; but he says in answer to this — “*But ye have defrauded Me*; what wonder then that my curse consumes you? As then I have been robbed by you, as far as ye could, I will render to you your just recompense; for it is not right that I should be bountiful and kind to you, while ye thus defraud me, and take from me what is my own.”

The meaning then is this — that it was indeed true that the Jews lamented that they were under a curse, but that the cause ought to have been searched out. They indeed wished their rapines and sacrileges to be forgiven, by which they defrauded God; but God declares that he punished them justly in consuming them with poverty and want, since they so sparingly rendered to him what they owed.

He mentions the *whole nation*,^{f55} and thus aggravates the wickedness of the Jews; for not a few were guilty of the sacrilege mentioned, but all, from the least to the greatest, they all plundered the tenths and the oblations. It hence follows that God’s vengeance did not exceed due limits, since there was as it were a common conspiracy; there were not ten or a hundred implicated in this sin, but, as he says, the whole people. It follows —

<390310> MALACHI 3:10

10. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

10. Adducite omnes decimas (vel, totas) ad domum thesauri (vel, ad repositorium,) et sit cibus in domo mea; et probate me nunc in hoc, dicit Iehova exercituum, annon aperiam vobis fenestras coelorum, depromam vobis benedictionem, ut non sit sufficientia (vel, ut non sit modus sufficientiae.)

He at length declares that they profited nothing by contending with God, but that a better way was open to them, that is, to return into favor with him. After having then repelled their unjust accusations, he again points out the remedy which he had already referred to — that if they dealt faithfully with God, he would be bountiful to them, and that his blessing would be promptly extended to them. This is the sum of the passage. They had been sufficiently proved guilty of rapacity in withholding the tenths and the oblations; as then the sacrilege was well known, the Prophet now passes judgement, as they say, according to what is usually done when the criminal is condemned, and the cause is decided, so that he who has been defrauded recovers his right.

So also now God deals with the Jews. *Bring*, he says, *to the repository*^{f56} (for this is the same as the house of the treasury, or of provisions) *all the tenths*, or the whole tenths. We hence learn that they had not withholden the whole of the tenths from the priests, but that they fraudulently brought the half, or retained as much as they could; for it was not without reason that he said, *Bring all*, or the whole. They then so paid the tenths as to supply the priests with a part only, and thus they trifled with God, according to what hypocrites do, who ever claim to themselves high honor, and try to perform their duty in such a way as not to discover their own perfidy, and yet they are not ashamed of the liberty they take to illude God; and of this we have here a remarkable example. We then see that it is no new or unusual thing for men to pretend to do the duties they owe to God, and at the same time to take away from him what is his own, and to

transfer it to themselves, and that manifestly, so that their impiety is evident, though it be covered by the veil of dissimulation.

He then adds, *Let there be meat in my house*. We have elsewhere explained this form of speaking, and in the last lecture the Prophet spoke also of the meat of God, not that God needs meat and drink, but that whatever he has given us ought to be deemed his. We have already stated, that it has been recorded for our sake, that the Jews offered bread, and victims, and things of this kind, and that they feasted at Jerusalem in the presence of God: for what is more desirable than that God should dwell in the midst of us? and this is often repeated in the law. But this could not have been set forth to us in a way so familiar, as when God is represented as in a manner sitting at table with us, as though he were our guest, eating of the same bread and of the other provisions: and hence it is said in the law, “Thou shalt feast and rejoice before thy God.” (^{<050218>}Deuteronomy 2:18.) Now as God needs not meat and drink, as it has been said, and as men in their grossness are ever prone to superstitions, he substituted the priests and the poor in his own place, to prevent the Jews from entertaining earthly notions respecting him. And this kind of modification or correction deserves to be noticed: for the Lord on the one hand intended to draw men in a kind manner to himself; but, on the other hand, he proposed to raise their minds upward to heaven, lest they should ascribe to him anything unworthy of himself, as is wont to be done, and is very common.

But, at the same time, he again accuses them of sacrilege, for he complains that he was deprived of meat; *Let there then be meat in my house; and prove me by this, saith Jehovah, if I wily not open*, etc. He confirms what he said before, and yet proceeds with his promise, for by subjecting himself to a proof, he boldly repels their calumny in saying that they were without cause consumed with want, and that God had changed his nature, because he had not given a large supply of provisions. God then briefly shows, that wrong had been done to him, for he admits of a proof or a trial, as though he had said, “If you choose to contest the point, I will soon settle it, for if you bring to me the tenths and them entire, there will immediately come to you a great abundance of all provisions: it will hence be evident, that I am not the cause of barrenness, but that it is your wickedness, because ye have sacrilegiously defrauded me.”

Then he adds, *If I will not open to you the windows of heaven*. It is the first thing as to fertility that the heavens should water the earth, according to what Scripture declares: and hence God threatens in the law that the heaven would be iron and the earth brass, (<052823> Deuteronomy 28:23,) for there is a mutual connection between the heaven and the earth, and he says elsewhere by a Prophet,

“The heaven will hear the earth, and the earth will hear the corn and wine, and the corn and wine will hear men.”
(<280209> Hosea 2:9.)

For when famine urges us, we cry for bread and wine, as our life seems in a manner to be dependent on these supplies. When there is no wine nor corn, we meet with a denial; but the wine and the corn cry to the earth, and why? because according to the order fixed by God, they seek as it were to break forth; for when the bowels of the earth are closed, neither the corn nor the vine can come forth, and then they in vain call on the earth. The sense is the case with the earth; for when it is dry and as it were famished, it calls on the heavens, but if rain be denied, the heavens seem to reject its prayer. Then God in this place shows that the earth could not produce a single ear of corn, except the heavens supplied moisture or rain. God indeed could from the beginning have watered the earth without rain, as Moses relates he did at first, for a vapor then supplied the want of rain. Though then rain descends naturally, we are yet reminded here that God sends it. This is the first thing.

But as rain itself would not suffice, he adds, *I will unsheath*, etc.; for קר, *rek*, means properly to unsheath; but as this metaphor seems unnatural, some have more correctly rendered it, “I will draw out” Unnatural also is this version, “I will empty out a blessing,” and it perverts the meaning. Let us then follow what I have stated as the first — that a blessing is drawn out from God when the earth discharges its office, and becomes fertile or fruitful.^{f57} We hence see that God is not only in one way bountiful to us, but he also intends by various processes to render us sensible of his kindness: he rains from heaven to soften the earth, that it may in its bosom nourish the corn, and then send it forth from its bowels, as though it extended its breast to us; and further, God adds his blessing, so as to render the rain useful.

He subjoins the words עֵד-בְּלִי-דִי, *od-beli-di*, which some render, “that there may not be a sufficiency,” that is, that granaries and cellars might not be capable of containing such abundance. They then elicit this meaning — that so great would be the fruitfulness of the earth, and so large would be its produce, that their repositories would not be sufficiently capacious. But others give this version, “Beyond the measure of sufficiency.” The word דִּי, *di*, means properly sufficiency, or what is needful, as by inverting the letters it דִּי, *id.*^{f58} With regard to the general meaning there is but little difference. Suitable also is this version, “Beyond sufficiency;” that is, I will not regard what is needful for you, as though it were measured, but the abundance shall be overflowing. It follows —

<390311> MALACHI 3:11

11. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

11. Et increpabo vobis devorantem, et non corrumpet vobis fructum terrae, et non abortiet vobis vitis in agro, dicit Iehova exercituum.

God now again confirms the truth, that he would not in one way only be bountiful to them. He might indeed distribute to us daily our food, as we know that he thus fed his people in the wilderness; but his will is that the seed should rot in the earth, that it should then germinate, and in course of time grow, until it shoots into ears of corn; but it is still in no small danger, nay the corn is subject to many evils before it be gathered into the garner; for the locusts, the worms, the mildew, and other things may destroy it. God therefore, in order to set forth his kindness to men, enumerates here the ways and the means by which food is preserved; for it would not be enough that the seed should germinate, and that there should appear evidences of a great produce, the ears being fine and abundant, but it is necessary that the ears of corn themselves, before they become ripe, should be preserved from above; for on the one hand the chafers, the locusts, the worms, and other grubs, may suddenly creep in and devour the corn while in the field, and on the other hand, storms, and hail, and mildew, and oilier pestilential things, as I have said, may prove ruinous to the corn.

Hence God shows here, that he takes constant care of us, and every day and every night performs the office of a good and careful head of a family, who always watches for its benefit.

In the word *devourer*, I include all the evils to which we see that corn is subject; he therefore says, *he shall not destroy the fruit of the earth; nor bereaved shall be the vine for you in the fields.* The verb שָׁכַל, *shecal*, properly means to bereave or to deprive; but as this version, “bereaved shall not be vine,” would be harsh, some have rendered the words thus, “Miscarry shall not vine,” which I do not disapprove: *Miscarry then shall not the vine for you in the fields, saith Jehovah of hosts.*^{f59} It follows —

<390312> **MALACHI 3:12**

12. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

12. Et beatos dicent vos cunctae gentes, quia eritis vos terra desiderii (desiderabilis) dicit Iehova exercituum.

This verse is taken from the law, in which among other things God promises so happy a state to his chosen people, that the nations themselves would acknowledge in them the blessing of God. There is yet a contrast to be understood, — that having fallen into such misery, they were become as it were detestable to all nations, according to what the law also declares concerning them,

“If thou shalt keep my precepts, all nations shall call thee blessed; but if thou wilt despise me, thou shalt be a sport to all nations, all shall shake the head and move the lips; yea, they shall be astonished at the sight of thy misery, and whosoever shall hear his ears will tingle.” (<052801> Deuteronomy 28:1, 15.)

As then the Jews were consumed as it were in their miseries, the Prophet says, “If you turn to God, that happiness which he has promised you shall not be withheld; he has it as it were ready in his hand, like a treasure that is hidden, according to what is said in <193119> Psalm 31:19, ‘How great is the abundance of thy goodness! but it is laid up for them who fear thee.’” God then means, that he will not prostitute his blessing to dogs and swine, but

that it is always in reserve for his children, who are teachable and obedient. *The nations then shall call you blessed, for ye shall be a land of desire.*

This promise also is taken from the law, in which God says, that he had not in vain separated that land from the rest, because it was to be an example or a representation of his kindness through the whole world. We indeed know that God has ever been bountiful even to all nations, so as to satisfy them abundantly with provisions; but the land of Israel is called the land of desire, or a desirable land, because it was the special scene of God's bounty, not only as to meat and drink, but also as to other more excellent blessings. He now adds —

<390313> MALACHI 3:13-15	
13. Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee?	13. Invaluerunt contra me verba vestra, dicit Iehova; et dixistis, In quo locuti sumus contra te?
14. Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?	14. Dixistis, Frustra servitur Deo et quae utilitas? quia custodivimus custodiam ejus, et quia ambulavimus supplices (vel, humiles; in obscuro vultu, ad verbum) coram facie Iehovae exercituum.
15. And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.	15. Et nunc nos beatos dicimus superbos; etiam aedificantur qui faciunt iniquitatem, etiam tentant Deum et liberantur.

Here again God expostulates with the Jews on account of their impious and wicked blasphemy in saying, that he disappointed his servants, and that he made no difference between good and evil, because he was kind to the unfaithful and the faithful indiscriminately, and also that he overlooked the obedience rendered to him.

He says now that their *words grew strong*; by which he denotes their insolence, as though he had said, *Vous avez gagné le plus haut*; for פִּתְּחָהּ,

chezak, is to be strong. He means that such was the waywardness of the Jews that it could not by any means be checked; they were like men whom we see, who when once seized by rage and madness, become so vociferous that they will not listen to any admonitions or sane counsels. At first they murmur and are only heard to whisper; but when they have attained full liberty, they then send forth, as I have said, their furious clamours against heaven. This is the sin which the Prophet now condemns by saying, that the Jews grew strong in crying against God.^{f60} They again answer and say, *In what have we spoken against thee?*^{f61} It appears from these so many repetitions that the hypocrisy, which was united with great effrontery, could not be easily corrected in a people so refractory: it ought indeed to have come to their minds that they had wickedly accused God. But they acknowledge here no fault, “What meanest thou?” as though they wished to arraign the Prophet for having falsely charged them, inasmuch as they were conscious of no wrong.

He then gives the reason why he said, that their words grew strong against God, that is, that they daringly and furiously spoke evil of God; and the reason was, because they *said, that God was worshipped in vain*. They thought that they worshipped God perfectly; and this was their false principle; for hypocrites ever lay claim to complete holiness, and cannot bear to confess their own evils; even when their conscience goads them, they deceive themselves with vain flatteries, and always endeavor to draw over them some veil that their disgrace may not appear before men. Hence hypocrites seek to deceive themselves, God, angels, and men; and when they are inflated with the confidence that they worship God purely, rightly, and without any defect, and that they are without any blame, they will betray the virulence which lies within, whenever God does not help them as they wish, whenever he submits not to their will: for when they are prosperous, God is hauntingly blessed by them; but as soon as he withdraws his hand and begins to prove their patience, they will then show, as I have said, what sort of worshippers of God they are. But in the service of God the chief thing is this — that men deny themselves and give themselves up to be ruled by God, and never raise a clamor when he humbles them.

We hence see how it was that the Jews found fault with God; for they were persuaded that they fully performed their duty, which was yet most false; and then, they were not willing to submit to God, and to undertake

his yoke, because they did not consider in how many ways they had provoked God's wrath, and what just and multiplied reasons he has for chastising his people, even when they do nothing wrong. As then they did not seriously consider any of these things, they thought that he was unjust to them, In vain then do we serve God. These thoughts, as we have said, sometimes come across the minds of the faithful; but they, as it becomes them, resist such thoughts: the Jews, on the contrary, as though they were victorious, vomited forth these blasphemies against God.

In vain we serve God; what benefit? they said: for we have kept his charge, we have walked obscurely, or humbly, before Jehovah of hosts;^{f62} and yet we are constrained to call the proud, or the impious, *happy*. Here they bring a twofold accusation against God, that they received no reward for their piety when they faithfully discharged their duty towards God, — and also that it was better with the ungodly and the despisers of God than with them. We hence see how reproachfully they exaggerated what they deemed the injustice of God, at least how they themselves imagined that he disappointed the just of their deserved reward, and that he favored the ungodly and the wicked as though he was pleased with them, as though he intended the more to exasperate the sorrow of his own servants, who, though they faithfully worshipped, yet saw that they did so in vain, as God concealed himself and did not regard their services.

That the good also are tempted, as we have said, by thoughts of this kind, is no wonder, when the state of things in the world is in greater confusion. Even Solomon says,

“All things happen alike to the just and to the unjust, to him who offers sacrifices, and to him who does not sacrifice,”
(^{<210902>} Ecclesiastes 9:2,)

hence the earth is full of impiety and contempt. There is then an occasion for indignation and envy offered to us; but as God designedly tries our faith by such confusions, we must remember that we must exercise patience. It is not at the same time enough for us to submit to God's judgement, except we also consider that we are justly distressed; and that though we may be attentive to what is just and upright, many vices still cleave to us, and that we are sprinkled with many spots, which provoke God's wrath against us. Let us then learn to form a right judgement as to what our life is, and then let us bear in mind how many are the reasons

why God should sometimes deal roughly with us. Thus all our envying will cease, and our minds will be prepared calmly to obey. In short, these considerations will check whatever perverseness there may be in us, so that neither our wicked thoughts nor our words will be so strong as to rise in rebellion against God.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since we continue to afford many and various reasons to induce thee to withdraw thy blessing, and to show thyself displeased with us, — O grant, that we may patiently bear thy scourges, by which thou chastises us, and also profit under them, and so contend with all our depraved affections and the corruptions of the flesh, that we may become partakers of thy paternal kindness, which thou offerest to us, and also so taste of thy goodness, which in innumerable ways is manifested towards us, that it may keep us in the pursuit of true religion; finally, may our tongues be consecrated to magnify thy judgement and to celebrate thy justice, that whatever happens to us, we may always serve thee through our whole life as our Father, and declare also thy goodness towards us, and confess that we are justly punished whenever thou visitest us with severity, until we shall at length reach that blessed rest, which is to be the end of all our evils, and an entrance, not only into life, but also into that full glory and happiness, which has been procured for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. — Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTIETH

WE saw in our last lecture that the Jews were indignant, because God did not treat them with more kindness, as they thought that they rightly performed their duty towards Him. We said that such an expostulation can never be justly made by men; for though they may find God rigid, there are yet always many reasons why he should by various troubles exercise them; but hypocrites seem to themselves to be of all men the most perfect, though they have only the guise or mask of religion. They indeed say that they have kept the Law, but when we come to the test, their emptiness is found out; for the main thing in the Law is wanting, that is, integrity of heart; nay, in the outward life they are found to be transgressors.

However this may be, they boasted that they kept the law, as we find in this passage, *We have kept his charge*. The doctrine of the law is here by a metaphor called a charge or keeping (*custodia*,) because it rules us, it confines us also within limits that we may not wander in uncertainty, it restrains our corrupt desires; in short, it keeps us under the fear of God and in the best order. Had the Jews considered this, they could never have dared to ascribe so much to themselves. Now this word, then commonly used, is adopted by the Prophet, and thus he shows how little attention they gave to the consideration of God's law; for they thought that their whole life was conformable to all the commandments, and yet they conformed hardly to the thousandth part of them. They add, *We have walked with a dark face* or dress.^{f63} There is here also a metaphor, for they meant that they had been humble and lowly before God. It is indeed no ordinary thing in God's service to lay aside all pride and vain confidence, and to walk humbly with him: but hypocrites, like apes, imitate what God requires and approves; and at the same time they say nothing of changing the heart. Fear and sorrow are required, according to what we have seen in the Prophet Micah; but hypocrites think that a dejected countenance is enough; and hence they often pretend sorrow, while they inwardly please and flatter themselves: and on this account we find in Isaiah, the fifty-eighth chapter, as well as in this place, that they bring a charge against God, that he did not regard them, when they walked with a sad countenance, when they macerated themselves with fastings: in short, when by various other performances they showed great holiness, they

brought an accusation against God, because he disregarded all these things, or made not that account of them which they expected.

Let us then remember, that the Jews were guilty of two errors; first, they presented to God an empty appearance for true humility, for they were no doubt swollen with false confidence though they pretended to be abject and low before God; secondly, they claimed for themselves more than what was just, for though there may have been some apparent modesty and submissiveness in them, yet they exceeded due limits; for we always swell with presumption, at least we are never thoroughly freed from it. They then falsely pretended, that they walked lowly and dejectedly before God. It follows —

MALACHI 3:15

15. And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

15. Et nunc nos beatos dicimus superbos; etiam aedificantur qui faciunt iniquitatem, etiam tentant Deum et liberantur.

This verse is connected with the last, for the force of these words, “We have walked sorrowfully before God and have carefully kept his precepts,” does not fully appear, except this clause be added — that they saw in the meantime that the proud flourished and had their delights, as though they said, “We strive to deserve well of God by our services; he overlooks all our religious acts, and pours as it were all his bounty on our enemies, who are yet ungodly and profane.” We now see how these verses are connected together, for God disappointed the Jews of the reward they thought due to them, and in the meantime bestowed on the impious and undeserving his kindness.

To call any one blessed, as we have before seen, is to acknowledge that God’s blessing is upon him, according to what God had promised, “Behold, all nations shall call thee blessed.” So a changed state of things is here set forth, for the Jews, when they were miserable, called others blessed; not that they willingly declared this, but envy forced them to complain of the cheerful and hamper state of the Gentiles, who were yet ungodly. And by the *proud* they meant all the despisers of God, a part being mentioned for the whole; and they were so called, because faith alone

humbles us. Many unbelievers are indeed lauded for their humility, but no one becomes really humble without being first emptied of every conceit as to his own virtues. Some rise up against God, and rob him of what is his own, and then it is no wonder that they act insolently towards their neighbors, since they dare even to raise up their horns against God himself. And in many parts of Scripture the unbelieving are called proud, in order that we may know that we cannot be formed and habituated to humility until we submit to the yoke of God, so that he may turn us wherever he wishes, and until we cast aside every confidence in ourselves. ^{f64}

As well as, they said; for גַּם, *gam*, is here repeated, and must be rendered “as well as,” that is, “All who do iniquity as well as all who tempt God, *are built up* and *are delivered*. In the first place what is general is stated, and then what is particular, and yet the Prophet speaks of the same persons, for he first calls God’s despisers iniquitous, and he afterwards says, that the same tempted God, which is more special. The sum of the whole is, — that God’s favor was conspicuous towards the despisers of the law, for they lived prosperously, and were also delivered, and found God their helper in adversity.

The verb, to *build*, is taken in Hebrew in the sense of prospering, and is applied to many things. When therefore any one grows and increases in honors or in riches, when he accumulates wealth, or when he is raised as it were by degrees to a higher condition, he is said to be built up. It is also added that they were *delivered*, for it would not be enough to acquire much wealth, except aid from God comes in adversity, for no one, even the most fortunate, is exempt from every evil. Hence to building up the Prophet adds this second clause, — that God delivered the wicked from all evils, as though he covered them under his shadow, and as though they were his clients. With regard to the second verb, when he says that the ungodly *tempted* God, it is, we know, the work of unbelief to contend with God. The Prophet used the same word shortly before, when he said, “Prove me in this:” but God then, after the manner of men, submitted to a trial; here, on the contrary, the Prophet condemns that insolence which very commonly prevails in the world, when men seek to confine God, and to impose on him a law, and to inquire into his judgements: it is in short as though they had a right to prescribe to him according to their own caprice, so that he should not do this or that, and which if he did, to call on him to

plead his own cause. We now then perceive what it is to prove or tempt God. It follows —

<390316> **MALACHI 3:16**

16. Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

16. Tunc loquuntur timentes Iehovam quisque ad socium suum; et attendit Iehova, et audivit; et scriptus est liber memoriae (vel, memorialis) coram facie eius pro timentibus Iehovam, et cogitantibus de nomine eius, (vel, in pretio habentibus nomen eius.)

In this verse the Prophet tells us that his doctrine had not been without fruit, for the faithful had been stimulated, so that they animated one another, and thus restored each other to a right course. They who explain the words — that the faithful spoke, indefinitely, pervert the meaning of the Prophet, and they also suppress the particle **אז**, *az*, then. The very subject proves that a certain time is denoted, as though the Prophet had said, that before he addressed the people and vehemently reprov'd their vices, there was much indifference among them, but that at length the faithful were awakened.

We are hence taught that we are by nature slothful and tardy, until God as it were plucks our ears; there is therefore need of warnings and stimulants. But let us also learn to attend to what is taught, lest it should become frigid to us. We ought at the same time to observe, that all were not moved by the Prophet's exhortations to repent, but those who feared God: the greater part no doubt securely went on in their vices, and even openly derided the Prophet's teaching. As then the truth profited only those who feared God, let us not wonder that it is despised at this day by the people in general; for it is given but to a few to obey God's word; and the conversion of the heart is the peculiar gift of the Holy Spirit. There is therefore no reason for pious teachers to despond, when they do not see their doctrine received everywhere and by all, or when they see that but a few make any progress in it; but let them be content, when the Lord

blesses their labor and renders it profitable and fruitful to some, however small their number may be.

But the Prophet not only says that individuals were Touched with repentance, but also that they *spoke among themselves*; ^{f65} by which he intimates, that our efforts ought to be extended to our brethren: and it is an evidence of true repentance, when each one endeavors as much as he can to unite to himself as many friends as possible, so that they may with one consent return to the way from which they had departed, yea, that they may return to God whom they had forsaken. This then is what we are to understand by the words spoken mutually by God's servants, which the Prophet does not express.

He says that Jehovah *attended* and *heard*, and that a *book of remembrance was written before him*. He proves here that the faithful had not in vain repented, for God became a witness and a spectator: and this part is especially worthy of being noticed; for we lose not our labor when we turn to God, because he will receive us as it were with open arms.

Our Prophet wished especially to show, that God *attended*; and hence he uses three forms of speaking. One word would have been enough, but he adds two more; and this is particularly emphatical, that there was a *book of remembrance written*. His purpose then was by this multiplicity of words to give greater encouragement to the faithful, that they might be convinced that their reward would be certain as soon as they devoted themselves to God, for God would not be blind to their piety.

The Prophet at the same time seems to point it out as something miraculous, that there were found then among the people any who were yet capable of being healed, since so much wickedness had prevailed among the people, nay, had become hardened, as we have seen, to an extreme obstinacy; for there was nothing sound or upright either among the priests or the common people. As then they had long indulged with loose reins in all kinds of wickedness, it was incredible, that any could be converted, or that any piety and fear of God could be found remaining among them. This then is the reason why the Prophet says, that God *attended* and *heard*, and that a *book was written*; he speaks as though of a thing unusual, which could not but appear as a miracle in a state of things so confused and almost past hope. The design of the whole is to show, that the faithful ought not to doubt, but that their repentance is ever

regarded by God, and especially when the utmost despair lays hold on their minds; for it often distresses the godly, when they see no remedy to be hoped for; then they think that their repentance will be useless: hence it is that the Prophet dwells so much on this point, in order that they might feel assured, that though no hope appeared, yet repentance availed for their salvation before God; and for this reason he adds, that this *book was written for those who feared God.*^{f66}

With regard to the participle חשבים, *cheshevim*, the verb חשב, *chesheb*, means to reckon or to count, and also to think; and so some render it here, “Who think of his name.” And doubtless this is a rare virtue; for we see that forgetfulness easily creeps over us, which extinguishes the fear of God, so that we take such a liberty, as though they who forget God can sin with impunity: and hence it is said often in the Psalms, that the fear of God is before the eyes of the godly. This seems frigid at the first view; but he who remembers God has made much progress in his religious course; and we also find by experience that the mere remembrance of God, when real, is a bridle to us sufficiently strong to restrain all our depraved lusts. But as the price of a thing is attained by reckoning, the other version is appropriate, — that the faithful value or esteem the name of God.^{f67} It follows —

<390317> MALACHI 3:17

17. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

17. Et erunt mihi, dicit Iehova exercituum, die illa qua ego facio, peculium; et parcam eis (super eos ad verbum) sicuti parcat vir suo filio, qui obsequitur ei.

He shows by the issue itself why a book of remembrance was written — that God in due time would again undertake to defend and cherish his Church. Though then for a time many troubles were to be sustained by the godly, yet the Prophet shows that they did not in vain serve God; for facts would at length prove that their obedience has not been overlooked. But the two things which he mentions ought to be noticed; for a book of remembrance is first written before God, and then God executes what is written in the book. When therefore we seem to serve God in vain, let us

know that the obedience we render to him will come to an account, and that he is a just Judge, though he may not immediately stretch forth his hand to us.

In the first place then the Prophet testifies that God knows what is done by every one; and in the second place he adds that he will in his own time perform what he has decreed. So also in judgements, he preserves the same order in knowing and in executing. For when he said to Abraham that the cry of Sodom came up to heaven, (<011820> Genesis 18:20,) how great and how supine was the security of the city. How wantonly and how savagely they despised every authority to the very last moment! But God had long before ascended his tribunal, and had taken an account of their wickedness. So also in the case of the godly, though he seems to overlook their obedience, yet he has not his eyes closed, or his ears closed, for there is a book of memorial written before him.

Hence he says, *They shall be in the day I make*. The verb is put by itself, but we may easily learn from the context that it refers to the restoration of the Church. *In the day* then *in which I shall make*, that is, complete what I have already said; for he had before promised to restore the Church. As then he speaks of a known thing, he says shortly, *In the day I shall make*, or complete my work, *they shall be to me a peculiar treasure*.^{f68} This phrase confirms what I have already stated — that God has his season and opportunity, in order that there may be no presumption in us to prescribe to him the time when he is to do this or that. In the day then when he shall gather his Church, it will then appear that we are his peculiar treasure.

Thus the Prophet in these words exhorts us to patience, lest it should be grievous to us to groan under our burden, and not to find God's help according to our wishes, and lest also it should be grievous to us to bear troubles in common with the whole Church. Were one or two of us subject to the cross, and doomed to sorrow and grief in this world, our condition might seem hard; but since the godly, from the first to the last, are made to be our associates in bearing the cross of Christ, and to be conformed to his example, there is no reason for any one of us to shun his lot; for we are not better than the holy patriarchs, apostles, and so many of the faithful whom God has exercised with the cross. Since then the common restoration of the Church is here set before us, let us know that a reason is here given for constancy and fortitude; for it would be disgraceful for us to faint, when

we have so many leaders in this warfare, who by their examples stretch forth as it were their hands to us; for as Abraham, David, and other Patriarchs and Prophets, as well as Apostles, have suffered so many and so grievous troubles, ought not this fact to raise up our spirits? and if at any time our feet and our legs tremble, ought it not to be sufficient to strengthen us, that so many excellent chiefs and leaders invite us to persevere by their example? We then see that this has not been laid down for nothing, *when I shall make*, or complete my work.

By the words *peculiar treasure*, God intimates that the lot of the godly will be different from that of the world; as though he had said, “Ye are now so mixed together, that they who serve me seem not to be peculiar any more than strangers; but they shall then be my peculiar treasure.” This is to be taken, as I have already mentioned, for the outward appearance; for we know that we have been chosen by God, before the foundation of the world, for this end — that we might be to him a peculiar treasure. But when we are afflicted in common with the wicked, or when we seem to be even rejected, and the ungodly, on the other hand, seem to have God propitious to them, then nothing seems less true than this promise. I therefore said that this ought to be referred to the outward appearance — that the faithful are God’s peculiar treasure, that they are valued by him, and that he shows to them peculiar love, as to his own inheritance.

And this mode of speaking occurs in many parts of scripture; for God is often said to repudiate his people; the word separation, or divorce, is often mentioned; he is said to have destroyed his inheritance. Grievous is the trial, when God cherishes as it were in his bosom the ungodly, and we at the same time are exposed to every kind of miserie; but we see what happened to the ancient Church: let us then arm ourselves for this contest, and be satisfied with the inward testimony of the Spirit, though outward things do not prosper.

He adds, *And I will spare them as a man spares*, etc. He states here a promise which ought especially to be observed: it contains two clauses; the first is, that the Jews who remained alive would render obedience to God, by which they would prove themselves to be children indeed, and not in name only: and the second is, that God would forgive them, that is, that he would exercise pardon in receiving their services, which could not otherwise please him. And there is no doubt but that the Spirit of

regeneration is included in the words, *the son who serves him*; not that the faithful addressed here were wholly destitute of the fear of God; but God promises an increase of grace, as though he had said, “I will gather to myself the people who faithfully and sincerely worship me.” Though then he speaks not here of the beginning of a religious and holy life, it is yet the same as though he had said, that the faithful would be under his government, that they might denote themselves to his service.

The second promise refers to another grace, — that God in his mercy would approve of the obedience of the godly, though in itself unworthy to come to his presence. How necessary this indulgence is to Us, they who are really and truly acquainted with the fear of God, fully know. The sophists daringly prattle about merits, and fill themselves and others with empty pride; but they who understand that no man can stand before God’s tribunal, do not dream of any merits, nor do they believe that they can bring anything before God, by which they can conciliate his favor. Hence their only refuge is what the Prophet here teaches us, that God *s pares* them.

And it must be observed, that the Prophet does not speak simply of the remission of sins: our salvation, we know, consists of two things — that God rules us by his Spirit, and forms us anew in his own image through the whole course of our life, — and also that he buries our sins. But the Prophet refers here to the remission of sins, of which we have need as to our good works; for it is certain, that even when we devote ourselves with all possible effort and zeal to God’s service there is yet something always wanting. Hence it is that no work, however right and perfect before men, deserves this distinction and honor before God. It is therefore necessary, even when we strive our utmost to serve God, to confess that without his forgiveness whatever we bring deserves rejection rather than his favor. Hence the Prophet says, that when God is reconciled to us, there is no reason to fear that he will reject us, because we are not perfect; for though our works be sprinkled with many spots, they will yet be acceptable to him, and though we labor under many defects, we shall yet be approved by him. How so? Because he will spare us: for a father is indulgent to his children, and though he may see a blemish in the body of his son, he will not yet cast him out of his house; nay, though he may have a son lame, or squint-eyed, or singular for any other defect, he will yet pity him, and will not cease to love him: so also is the case with respect to God, who, when

he adopts us as his children, will forgive our sins. And as a father is pleased with every small attention when he sees his son submissive, and does not require from him what he requires from a servant; so God acts; he repudiates not our obedience, however defective it may be. ^{f69}

We hence see the design and meaning of the Prophet, — that he promises pardon from God to the faithful, after having been reconciled to him, because they serve God as children willingly, — and that God also, though their works are unworthy of his favor, will yet count them as acceptable, even through pardon, and not on the ground of merit or worthiness.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as Satan strives to draw us away from every attention to true religion, when things in the world are in a state of disorder and confusion, — O grant, that we may know that thou caress for us; and if we perceive not this by what we find in the world, may we rely on thy word, and doubt not but that thou ever watches over our safety; and being supported by this confidence, may we ever go on in the course of our calling: and as thou hast deigned to make us partakers of that evidence of thy favor, by which we know that we are reconciled to thee in thine only-begotten Son; and being thus made his members, may we never hesitate cheerfully to offer to thee our services, however defective they may be, since thou hast once promised to be a propitious Father to us, so as not rigidly to try what we offer to thee, but so graciously to accept it, that we may know that not only our sins, which justly deserve condemnation, are forgiven and remitted to us, but that thou also so bearest with our infirmities and our defects in our imperfect works, that we shall at length receive the reward which thou hast promised, and which we cannot attain through our merits, but through the sanctification of thy Spirit, and through the sprinkling of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. — Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FIRST

WE saw in the last lecture that no works of the faithful please God, except through a gratuitous acceptance: it hence follows, that nothing can be ascribed to merits without derogating from the grace of Christ; for if the value of works depends on this, that God is our Father and is reconciled to us in Christ, nothing can be more absurd than to set up works, which ought to be subordinated to this paternal favor of God.

We now see how these two things harmonize — that reward is promised to works, and that works themselves deserve nothing before God; for though God can justly reject them, he yet regards them as acceptable, because he forgives all their defects. Thus have we brief stated the reason why our works are approved by God; they are not so on account of any worthiness, but through his favor alone; for there is no work which would not on account of its imperfection be displeasing to God, were he to require that it should be according to the rule of his law. Hence God departs from his own law and turns to mercy, that he may regard works as acceptable, which otherwise could not, being defective, stand before his presence. It now follows —

<390318> MALACHI 3:18

18. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

18. Et convertemini, et videbitis inter justum et impium, inter servientem Deo et eum qui non servit ei.

This verse at the first view seems to be addressed to the faithful; for there never has been a turning as to the reprobate: but as the word has a wide meaning, the passage may be suitably applied to the whole people, according to what we find in Zechariah, “They shall see him whom they have pierced;” for we have said that this might be understood both of the good and of the bad. So also the whole people might be viewed as addressed in these words. But when we more minutely examine all circumstances, it seems that Malachi more particularly addressed the ungodly, and checked again their furious blasphemies; for we find almost

the same sentiment expressed here, as when he said, “The Lord whom ye expect shall come to his temple, and the angel of the covenant whom ye seek;” and at the same time he showed that the coming of Christ, which they said was advancing too slowly, would not be such as they desired or looked for. “Let not this delay,” he says, “be grievous to you; for everything terrible which his majesty possesses will be turned on your heads; for he will come as an angry judge and an avenger: ye therefore in vain hope for any comfort or alleviation from his presence.”

So also he says in this place, *Ye shall see this difference between the just and the unjust*; that is, “Ye shall find that God does not sleep in heaven, when the ungodly grow wanton on the earth and abandon themselves to every kind of wickedness: experience then will at length teach you, that men shall not thus with impunity become insolent against God, but that all your wickedness must come to a reckoning.” When therefore he says, that they would find the difference between the godly and the ungodly, he means that they would find by the punishments which God would inflict, that men are not permitted to indulge their own depraved desires, as though God slept in heaven, forgetful of his office. Their blasphemy was, “In vain is God worshipped; what is the benefit? for we have kept his charge, and yet the proud are more happy than we are.” As then they accused God of such a connivance, as though he disregarded and cast away his own servants, and showed favor to the wicked, Malachi returns them an answer and says, “Ye shall see how much the good differ from the evil; God indeed spares the wicked, but he will at length rise to judgement, and come armed suddenly upon them, and then ye shall know that all the deeds of men are noticed by him, and that wickedness shall not go unpunished, though God for a time delays his vengeance.”

We now then perceive the Prophet’s meaning — that the ungodly who clamor against God, as though he made no account either of the just or of the unjust, shall find, even to their own loss, that he is one who punishes wickedness.

As to the verb *turn*, I have already said that it has a wide meaning, and does not always mean repentance or the renovation of man: it may therefore be taken as signifying only a different state of things; as though he had said, “The dice shall be turned, and such will be your condition when God shall begin to execute his judgement, that he will then

manifestly show that he has not forgotten his office, though he does not immediately hasten to execute his judgements.” *Ye shall return then and see.* Yet if any one prefers to regard returning as the feeling of God’s judgements, by which even the ungodly shall be touched, though without repentance, the view will not be unsuitable, and I am disposed to embrace it, that is, that the Lord will shake off the stupidity in which they were sunk, and will correct their madness, so that they will not dare to vomit forth so insolently their blasphemies, as they had been wont to do: Ye then shall return; that is, “I will make my judgement known to you, and ye shall not rush on headlong as wild beasts, for being taught by facts, ye shall learn the difference between the good and the bad.”^{f70}

The *just*, and he who *serves* God, mean the same person. We hence learn that there is no justice where there is no obedience rendered to God. The first thing then in a good and an upright life, is to serve God; for it would be but of little benefit to be harmless towards men, when his right is denied: and we know that God is not rightly served but according to what his law prescribes. We must then always come to this, — that men must obey God, if they desire to form their life aright. Now follows —

CHAPTER 4

<390401> MALACHI 4:1

1. For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

1. Quia ecce dies venit ardens tanquam clibanus; et erunt omnes superbi et omnes facientes iniquitatem stipula; et inflammabit eos dies qui venturus est, dicit Iehova exercituum, qui non relinquet illis radicem et ramum.

He confirms the previous verse, for he denounces ruin on all the reprobate and the despisers of God; and he also confirms what I have mentioned, — that he sets this threatening in opposition to the slanders which they commonly uttered against God, as though he had ceased to discharge his office as a Judge. Though indeed he speaks in the third person, yet he is not deficient in force when he says,

Behold, come shall the day, which shed consume all the ungodly, as a hernia oven the stubble. The comparison is very common which the Prophet uses, when he says, that the ungodly shall be like stubble: I trill not therefore quote passages which must be well known, and they are so many that there is no need to adduce here either two or three of them. The vengeance of God is also often compared to fire and to a flame; and we know how fierce and how dreadful an element is fire, when it lays hold on wood or some other dry material. Hence according to the common usage of Scripture, the Prophet says, that the day of the Lord would be like an oven, and that the ungodly would be like stubble. The demonstrative particle, *Behold*, shows certainty, *Behold, I come*. The present time is put here for the future, a common thing in Hebrew. But the Prophet called the attention of the Jews as it were to what was present, that his prophecy might not appear doubtful, and that they might understand that God's vengeance was not far distant, but already suspended over their heads.

There is however a question as to the day which he points out. The greater part think that the Prophet speaks of the last coming of Christ, which

seems not to me probably. It is indeed true that these and similar expressions, which everywhere occur in Scripture, have not their full accomplishment in this world; but God so suspends his judgements, as yet never to withhold from giving evidences of them that the godly may have some props to their faith: for if God gave no specimen or proof of his providence, it would immediately occur to our minds, that there is to be no judgement; but he sets before us some examples, that we may learn that he will some time be the judge of the world. It seems then to me more probable, that the Prophet speaks here of the renovation of the Church: for the wrath of God was then at length more kindled against the Jews, when they had alienated themselves from Christ; for their last hope and their last remedy in their evils was the aid of the Redeemer, and it was for the rejection of his favor that the Jews had to feel the dreadful punishment of their ingratitude. No sin could have been more atrocious than to have rejected the offered favor, in which their happiness and that of the whole world consisted. When the Prophet then says, that the *day would come*, he refers I think to the first coming of Christ; for the Jews made a confident boast of the coming of a Redeemer, and he gives them this answer — that the day of the Lord would come, such as they did not imagine, but a day which would wholly consume them, according to a quotation we have made from another Prophet,

“What will be the day of the Lord to you? that day will not be
light, but darkness, a thick darkness and not brightness.”
(^{<300518>} Amos 5:18.)

The day of the Lord will be an unhappy event to you, as though one escaped from the jaws of a lion, and fell at home on a serpent. So in this place he says that the day would come, which would consume them like an oven.

He says that *all the proud and the workers of iniquity* would be like *stubble*. He repeats their words, but somewhat ironically; for when they had said before that the proud were happy, they regarded themselves as being far from being such characters. Isaiah also in like manner condemned hypocrites, because they exposed to contempt their own brethren; for the worshippers of God were at that time in great reproach among the Jews; yea, hypocrites disdainfully treated the godly and the upright, as though they were the dregs and filth of the people. So also they said, “Behold, we

are constrained, not without great sorrow, to look on the happiness of the ungodly; for the proud and the despisers of God enjoy prosperity, they live in pleasures.” The Prophet now answers them ironically and says, “Ye shall see the difference which ye so much wish; for God will consume the proud and the ungodly.” He says this of them; but it is, as I have stated, as though he had said, “When your mask is taken away, Ye shall see where impiety is, that it is even in you; and therefore ye shall suffer the punishment which you have deserved.” This is the return which he had before mentioned: for though the ungodly do not seriously and sincerely return to God, yet they are forced, willing or unwilling, to acknowledge their impiety when God constrains them. Hence after they had been constrained to examine their own life, God visited them with the punishment they most justly deserved, though judgement had been invoked by themselves.

He now adds, *And it will leave neither root nor branch*. He means here that their ruin would be complete, as though he had said, that no residue of them would be found. As he had made them like stubble, so he mentions root and stalk; for branch is improper here, as he speaks of stubble, and branches belong to trees. The meaning, however, is not obscure, which is — that such would be the consumption that nothing would remain. This, indeed, properly belongs to the last judgement; but, as I have said, this is no reason why God should not set before our eyes some evidences of that vengeance which awaits the ungodly, by which our faith may be more and more confirmed daily.¹⁷¹

With regard to God’s name, which is mentioned twice, he reminds us that God does not execute his judgements in an even or a continued course, but that he has a fixed time, now for forbearance, then for vengeance, as it seems good to him. Whenever then the day of the Lord is mentioned in Scripture, let us know that God is bound by no laws, that he should hasten his work according to our hasty wishes; but the specific time is in his own power, and at his own will. On this subject I lightly touch only, because I have explained it more fully elsewhere. It follows —

2. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

2. Et orietur vobis timentibus nomen meum Sol justitiae, et sanitas in alis ejus; et exibitis et salietis quasi vituli saginae (vel, vituli pinguefacti.)

The Prophet now turns his discourse to the godly; and hence it appears more clearly that he has been hitherto threatening those gross hypocrites who arrogated sanctity to themselves alone, while yet they were continuing to provoke God's wrath; for he evidently addresses some different from those previously spoken of, when he says, Arise to you, etc.; he separates those who feared God, or the true servants of God, from that multitude with whom he has been hitherto contending. *Arise*, then, *to you who fear my name*, etc.

There is to be noticed here a contrast; for the body of the people were infected as it were with a general contagion, but God had preserved a few uncontaminated. As then he had been hitherto contending with the greatest part of the people, so he now gathers as it were apart the chosen few, and promises to them Christ as the author of salvation. For the godly, we know, trembled at threatenings, and would have almost fainted, had not God mitigated them. Whenever he denounced vengeance on sinners, the greater part either mocked, or became angry, at least were not duly impressed. Thus it happens that while God is thundering, the ungodly go on securely in their sinful courses; but the godly tremble at a word, and would be altogether cast down, were not God to apply a remedy.

Hence our Prophet softens the severity of the threatening which we have observed; as though he had said, that he had not announced the coming of Christ as terrible for the purpose of filling pious souls with fear, (for it was not spoken to them,) but only of terrifying the ungodly. The sum of the whole is briefly this — "Hearken ye," he says, "who fear God; for I have a different word for you, and that is, that the Sun of righteousness shall arise, which will bring healing in its wings. Let those despisers of God then perish, who, though they carry on war with him, yet seek to have him as it were bound to them; but raise ye up your heads, and patiently look for

that day, and with the hope of it calmly bear your troubles.” We now understand the import of this verse.

There is indeed no doubt but that Malachi calls Christ the Sun of righteousness; and a most suitable term it is, when we consider how the condition of the fathers differed from ours. God has always given light to his Church, but Christ brought the full light, according to what Isaiah teaches us,

“On thee shall Jehovah arise,
and the glory of God shall be seen in thee.” (<236001> Isaiah 60:1.)

This can be applied to none but to Christ. Again he says, “Behold darkness shall cover the earth,” etc.; “shine on thee shall Jehovah;” and farther,

“There shall be now no sun by day nor moon by night; but God alone shall give thee light.” (<236019> Isaiah 60:19.)

All these words show that Sun is a name appropriate to Christ; for God the Father has given a much clearer light in the person of Christ than formerly by the law, and by all the appendages of the law. And for this reason also is Christ called the light of the world; not that the fathers wandered as the blind in darkness, but that they were content with the dawn only, or with the moon and stars. We indeed know how obscure was the doctrine of the law, so that it may truly be said to be shadowy. When therefore the heavens became at length opened and clear by means of the gospel, it was through the rising of the Sun, which brought the full day; and hence it is the peculiar office of Christ to illuminate. And on this account it is said in the first chapter of John, that he was from the beginning the true light, which illuminates every man that cometh into the world, and yet that it was a light shining in darkness; for some sparks of reason continue in men, however blinded they are become through the fall of Adam and the corruption of nature. But Christ is peculiarly called light with regard to the faithful, whom he delivers from the blindness in which all are involved by nature, and whom he undertakes to guide by his Spirit.

The meaning then of the word sun, when metaphorically applied to Christ, is this, — that he is called a sun, because without him we cannot but wander and go astray, but that by his guidance we shall keep in the right way; and hence he says,

“He who follows me walks not in darkness.” (<430812> John 8:12.)

But we must observe that this is not to be confined to the person of Christ, but extended to the gospel. Hence Paul says,

“Awake thou who sleepest, and rise from darkness,
and Christ shall illuminate thee.” (<490514> Ephesians 5:14)

Christ then daily illuminates us by his doctrine and his Spirit; and though we see him not with our eyes, yet we find by experience that he is a sun.

He is called the sun of *righteousness*, either because of his perfect rectitude, in whom there is nothing defective, or because the righteousness of God is conspicuous in him: and yet, that we may know the light, derived from him, which proceeds from him to us and irradiates us, we are not to regard the transient concerns of this life, but what belongs to the spiritual life. The first thing is, that Christ performs towards us the office of a sun, not to guide our feet and hands as to what is earthly, but that he brings light to us, to show the way to heaven, and that by its means we may come to the enjoyment of a blessed and eternal life. We must secondly observe, that this spiritual light cannot be separated from righteousness; for how does Christ become our sun? It is by regenerating us by his Spirit into righteousness, by delivering us from the pollutions of the world, by renewing us after the image of God. We now then see the import of the word righteousness. ^{f72}

He adds, *And healing in its wings*. He gives the name of wings to the rays of the sun; and this comparison has much beauty, for it is taken from nature, and most fitly applied to Christ. There is nothing, we know, more cheering and healing than the rays of the sun; for ill-savor would soon overwhelm us, even within a day, were not the sun to purge the earth from its dregs; and without the sun there would be no respiration. We also feel a sort of relief at the rising of the sun; for the night is a kind of burden. When the sun sets, we feel as it were a heaviness in all our members; and the sick are exhilarated in the morning and experience a change from the influence of the sun; for it brings to us healing in its wing. But the Prophet has expressed what is still more, — that a clear sun in a serene sky brings healing; for there is an implied opposition between a cloudy or stormy time and a clear and bright season. During time of serenity we are far more cheerful, whether we be in health or in sickness; and there is no one who

does not derive some cheerfulness from the serenity of the heavens: but when it is cloudy, even the most healthy feels some inconvenience.

According to this view Malachi now says, that there would be *healing in the wings* of Christ, inasmuch as many evils were to be borne by the true servants of God; for if we consider the history of those times, it will appear that the condition of that people was most grievous. He now promises a change to them; for the restoration of the Church would bring them joy. See then in what way he meant there would be healing in the wings of Christ; for the darkness would be dissipated, and the heavens would be free from clouds, so as to exhilarate the minds of the godly.

By calling the godly those who *fear God*, he adopts the common language of Scripture; for we have said that the chief part of righteousness and holiness consists in the true worship of God: but something new is here expressed; for this fear is what peculiarly belongs to true religion, so that men submit to God, though he is invisible, though he does not address them face to face, though he does not openly show his hand armed with scourges. When therefore men of their own accord reverence the glory of God, and acknowledge that the world is governed by him, and that they are under his authority, this is a real evidence of true religion: and this is what the Prophet means by *name*. Hence they who fear the name of God, desire not to draw him down from heaven, nor seek manifest signs of his presence, but suffer their faith to be thus tried, so that they adore and worship God, though they see him not face to face, but only through a mirror and that darkly, and also through the displays of his power, justice, and other attributes, which are evident before our eyes.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast appointed thine only-begotten Son to be like a sun to us, we may not be blind, so as not to see his brightness; and that since he is pleased to guide us daily into the way of salvation, may we follow him and never be detained by any of the impediments of this world, so as not to pursue after that celestial life to which thou invitest us; and that as thou hast promised that he is to come and gather us into the eternal inheritance, may we not in the meantime grow wanton, but on the contrary watch with diligence and be ever attentively looking for

him; and my we not reject the favor which thou hast been pleased to offer us in him, and thus grow torpid in our dregs, but on the contrary be stimulated to fear thy none and truly to worship thee, until we shall at length obtain the fruit of our faith and piety, when he shall appear again for our final redemption, even that sun which has already appeared to us, in order that we might not remain involved in darkness, but hold on our way in the midst of darkness, even the way which leads us to heaven. — Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SECOND

MALACHI, after having said that the Sun of righteousness would arise on the Jews, now adds that it would be for their joy, for as sorrow lays hold on the faithful when they are without Christ, or when they think him far removed from them, so his favor is their chief happiness and real joy. Hence the angel when he made known to the shepherds that Christ was born, thus introduces his message,

“Behold, I declare to you great joy.” (<420210> Luke 2:10.)

Now though the comparison might seem rather unnatural, yet it was not without reason that the Prophet said that the Jews would be like *fattened calves*, for the change of which he speaks was incredible; hence it was necessary that the subject should be stated in a very homely manner, that they might entertain hope.

There is in the words *going forth*, an implied contrast, for anxiety had long held them as it were captives, but now they were to go forth and be at liberty, according to what takes place when things change for the better; we then openly declare our joy to one another, and we seek as it were a wide place for giving vent to our feelings. We now see why the Prophet says that the Jews would *go forth*: they had been before confined as it were within narrow limits, but God would now give them occasion for rejoicing, according to what Paul says,

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”
(<470317> 2 Corinthians 3:17). ^{f73}

It follows —

<390403> MALACHI 4:3

3. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.

3. Et pessundabitis impios, quia erunt pulvis sub plantis pedum vestrorum, in die qua ego facio, (alii vertunt, quam ego facio,) dicit Iehova exercituum.

When God promises redemption to his Church, he usually mentions what is of an opposite character, even the destruction and ruin of his enemies, and he does this on purpose lest envy should annoy or harass the faithful, while seeing the ungodly prosperous and happy. So also in this place Malachi says, that the *ungodly would be trodden under foot by the faithful like the dust*; and he says this lest the elect, while lying prostrate under the feet of their enemies and proudly trampled upon by them, should succumb under their troubles; but they were to look for what the Prophet declares here, for they were not only to be raised up by the hand of God, but were also to be superior to their enemies, and be enabled in their turn to suppress their pride: in short, he means that they were to be raised above all the height of the world.

At the same time, God does not allow his children cruelly to seek vengeance, for he would have them to be endued with meekness, so as not to cease to do good to the wicked and to pray for them, though they may have been unjustly treated by them. But, as I have already said, he meant here to obviate an evil which is natural to us all, for we are apt to despond when our enemies exult over us, and rage against us. Lest then their temporary success and prosperity should deject our minds, God brings a remedy, and strengthens our patience by this consideration, — that the state of things will shortly be changed, so that we shall triumph over the ungodly, who thought us to have been undone a hundred times; God will indeed visit them with extreme shame, because they not only fatuitously boast of their unjust deeds, but also raise up their horns against him.

Let us proceed; he says, *In the day in which I make.*^{f74} He again restrains their desires, that they might not with too much haste look forward, but wait for the day prefixed by the Lord. We indeed know how great is the importunity of men as to their wishes, and how ardently they seek their accomplishment unless God checks them. Whenever then we speak of the destruction of our enemies, let us remember that we ought to regard the day of the Lord, in which he purposes to execute his judgement. Some, as I have said, give a different version, but the one I have given is the most probable, and is also more generally approved. It now follows —

<390404> **MALACHI 4:4**

4. Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

4. Memores estote legis Mosis servi mei, quam mandavi ei in Horeb ad totum Israel, (nempe,) statuta et judicia, (vel, statutorum et judiciorum.)

This passage has not been clearly and fully explained, because interpreters did not understand the design of Malachi nor consider the time. We know that before the coming of Christ there was a kind of silence on the part of God, for by not sending Prophets for a time, he designed to stimulate as it were the Jews, so that they might with greater ardor seek Christ. Our Prophet was amongst the very last. As then the Jews were without Prophets, they ought more diligently to have attended to the law, and to have taken a more careful heed to the doctrine of religion contained in it. This is the reason why he now bids them to remember the law of Moses; as though he had said, "Hereafter shall come the time when ye shall be without Prophets, but your remedy shall be the law; attend then carefully to it, and beware lest you should forget it." For men, as soon as God ceases to speak to them even for the shortest time, are carried away after their own inventions, and are ever inclined to vanity, as we abundantly find by experience. Hence Malachi, in order to keep the Jews from wandering, and from thus departing from the pure doctrine of the law, reminds them that they were faithfully and constantly to remember it until the Redeemer came.

If it be asked why he mentions the law only, the answer is obvious, because that saying of Christ is true, that the law and the Prophets were until John. (<400313> Matthew 3:13.) It must yet be observed, that the prophetic office was not separated from the law, for all the prophecies which followed the law were as it were its appendages; so that they included nothing new, but were given that the people might be more fully retained in their obedience to the law. Hence as the Prophets were the interpreters of Moses, it is no wonder that their doctrine was subjected, or as they commonly say, subordinated to the law. The object of the Prophet was to make the Jews attentive to that doctrine which had been delivered to them from above by Moses and the Prophets, so as not to depart from

it even in the least degree; as though he had said, “God will not now send to you different teachers in succession; there is enough for your instruction in the law: there is no reason on this account that you should change anything in the discipline of the Church. Though God by ceasing to speak to you, may seem to let loose the reins, so as to allow every one to stray and wander in uncertainty after his own imaginations, it is yet not so; for the law is sufficient to guide us, provided we shake not off its yoke, nor through our ingratitude bury the light by which it directs us.”

He calls it the *law of Moses*, not because he was its author, but its minister, as also Paul calls the gospel “my gospel,” because he was its minister and preacher. At the same time God claims to himself the whole authority, by adding that Moses was his *savant*: we hence conclude that he brought nothing of himself; for the word servant is not to be confined to his vocation only, but also to his fidelity in executing his office. God then honored Moses with this title, not so much for his own sake, as in order to give sanction to his law, that no one might think that it was a doctrine invented by man. ¹⁷⁵ He expresses the same thing still more clearly by saying, that he had committed the law to him on *Horeb*; for this clause clearly asserts that Moses had faithfully discharged his office of a servant; for he brought nothing but what had been committed to him from above, and he delivered it, as they say, from hand to hand. Many give this version, “To whom I committed, in the valley of Horeb, statutes and judgements;” but I approve of the other rendering — that God makes himself here the author of the law, that all the godly might reverently receive it as coming from him. Horeb is Sinai; but they who describe these places say, that a part of the mountain towards the east is called Horeb, and that the other towards the west is called Sinai; but it is still the same mountain.

By saying *To all Israel*, or to the whole of Israel, he confirms what I have already said — that he had committed to them the law: that the Jews might be the more touched, he expressly says, that the law was given to them, and that this was a singular privilege with which God had favored them, according to what is said in ^{<19E720>}Psalm 147:20,

“He has not done so to other nations, nor has he manifested to them his judgements.”

For the nations had not been laid under such obligations as the Jews, to whom God had given his law as a peculiar treasure to his own children. And that no one might claim an exemption, he says, *to the whole of Israel*; as though he had said, “Neither the learned nor the unlearned, neither the rulers nor the common people, can have any excuse, except they all with the greatest care attend to the law, yea, all from the least to the greatest.”

What follows may admit of two explanations: for חוקים, *chukim*, and משפטים, *meshephethim*, may be referred to the verb זכרו, *zacaru*, remember; but as he says Which I have committed, we may take statutes and judgements as explanatory. As to the subject itself, it signifies but little which view we may adopt. There is no doubt but that God by these terms commends his law for its benefits; as though he had said, “The law includes what the Jews ought rightly to observe, even statutes and judgements.” We know that other terms are used in Scripture, such as פקודים, *pekudim*, precepts; מצוותים, *metsutum*, commandments; and עדותים, *odutim*, testimonies; but here the Prophet is content brief to remind the Jews that their ingratitude would be less excusable if they departed from the law of God, for this would be openly to reject statutes and judgements; and this is what I have stated, that they were here taught by the Prophet that the doctrine of the law is profitable, in order that they might attend to it more willingly.^{f76} It follows —

<390405> MALACHI 4:5	
5. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:	5. Ecce ego mitto vobis Eliam prophetam antequam veniat dies Iehovae magnus et terribilis.

The Prophet continues the same subject; for having testified to the Jews, that though God would for a time suspend the course of prophetic teaching, they yet had in the law what was sufficient for salvation, he now promises the renovation of the Church; as though he had said, “The Lord will again unexpectedly utter his voice after a long silence.” Isaiah speaks on the same subject, prophesying of the return of the people, when he says,

“Comfort ye, comfort my people, will our God say.”

(^{<234011>}Isaiah 40:11)

There is an emphatic import in the use of the future tense. So also in this passage, the Prophet declares that prophetic teaching would be again renewed, that when God showed mercy to his people, he would open his mouth, and show that he had been silent, not because he intended to forsake his people, but as we have said, for another end. At the same time he shows that the time would come, when his purpose was to confirm and seal all the prophecies by his only-begotten Son.

This passage has fascinated the Jews so as to think that men rise again; and their resurrection is, — that the souls of men pass into various bodies three or four times. There is indeed such a delirious notion as this held by that nation! We hence see how great is the sottishness of men, when they become alienated from Christ, who is the light of the world and the Sun of Righteousness, as we have lately seen. There is no need to disprove an error so palpable.

But Christ himself took away all doubt on this point, when he said, that John the Baptist was the Elijah, who had been promised; (^{<401110>}Matthew 11:10:) and the thing itself proves this, had not Christ spoken on the subject. And why John the Baptist is called Elijah, I shall explain in a few words. What some say of zeal, I shall say nothing of; and many have sought other likenesses, whom I shall neither follow nor blame. But this likeness seems to me the most suitable of all, — that God intended to raise up John the Baptist for the purpose of restoring his worship, as formerly he had raised up Elijah: for at the time of Elijah, we know, that not only the truth was corrupted and the worship of God vitiated, but that also all religion was almost extinct, so that nothing pure and sound remained. At the coming of Christ, though the Jews did not worship idols, but retained some outward form of religion, yet the whole of their religion was spurious, so that that time may truly be compared, on account of its multiplied pollutions, to the age of Elijah. John then was a true successor of Elijah, nor were any of the Prophets so much like John as Elijah: hence justly might his name be transferred to him.

But someone may object and say, that he is here called a prophet, while he yet denied that he was a prophet: to this the answer is obvious, — that John renounced the title of a prophet, that he might not hinder the progress

of Christ's teaching: hence he means not in those words that he ran presumptuously without a call, but that he was content to be counted the herald of Christ, so that his teaching might not prevent Christ from being heard alone. Yet Christ declares that he was a prophet, and more than a prophet, and that because his ministry was more excellent than that of a prophet.

He says, *Before shall come the day, great and terrible.* The Prophet seems not here to speak very suitably of Christ's coming; but he now addresses the whole people; and as there were many slothful and tardy, who even despised the favor of God, and others insolent and profane, he speaks not so kindly, but mixes these threatenings. We hence perceive why the Prophet describes the coming of Christ as terrible; he does this, not because Christ was to come to terrify men, but on the contrary, according to what Isaiah says,

“The smoking flax he will not extinguish, the shaken reed he will not break; not heard will his voice be in the streets, nor will he raise a clamor.” (<234203> Isaiah 42:3.)

Though then Christ calmly presents himself, as we have before observed, and as soon as he appears to us, he brings an abundant reason for joy; yet the perverseness of that people was such as to constrain the Prophet to use a severe language, according to the manner in which God deals daily with us; when he sees that we have a tasteless palate, he gives us some bitter medicine, so that we may have some relish for his favor. Whenever then we meet with any thing in Scripture tending to fill us with terror, let us remember that such thing is announced, because we are either deaf or slothful, or even rebellious, when God kindly invites us to himself. It follows —

<390406> **MALACHI 4:6**

6. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

6. Et convertet cor patrum ad filios, et cor filiorum ad patres; ne forte veniam et percutiam terram anathemate.

This verse may be viewed as containing a simple promise; but I prefer to regard it as including what is between an exhortation and a promise. The first thing is, that God reminds the Jews for what purpose he would send John, even to turn the hearts of men and to restore them to a holy unity of faith. It must therefore be noticed, that not only the Redeemer would come, but that after some intermission, as it has been said, had taken place, the doctrine of salvation would again have its own course, and would be commenced by John.

Yet the Prophet seems here to concede to men more than what is right, for the turning of the heart is God's peculiar work, and still more, it is more peculiarly his than his other works; and if no one can change a hair on the head of his brother, how can he renew his heart, so as to make him a new man? It is at the same time of more consequence to be regenerated than to be created and to be made only the inhabitants of this world. John then seems to be here too highly extolled, when the turning of the heart is ascribed to him. The solution of this difficulty may be easily given: when God thus speaks highly of his ministers, the power of his Spirit is not excluded; and he shows how great is the power of truth when he works through it by the secret influence of his Spirit. God sometimes connects himself with his servants, and sometimes separates himself from them: when he connects himself with them, he transfers to them what never ceases to dwell in him; for he never resigns to them his own office, but makes them partakers of it only. And this is the import of such expressions as these,

“Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted: whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven,” (^{<432023>} John 20:23;)

or when Paul says, that he had begotten the Corinthians, (^{<460215>} 1 Corinthians 2:15,) he did not claim for himself what he knew only belonged to God, but rather extolled the favor of God as manifested in his ministry, according to what he declares in another place,

“Not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”
(^{<461510>} 1 Corinthians 15:10.)

But when God separates himself from his ministers, nothing remains in them: “He who plants is nothing,” says Paul in another place,

“And he who waters is nothing, but God who gives the increase.”

(^{<460307>} 1 Corinthians 3:7.)

When then is it that teachers are co-workers with God? Even when God, ruling them by his Spirit, at the same time blesses their labor, so that it brings forth its fruit.

We now then see that this mode of speaking derogates nothing from God, that is, when the minister is said to turn the hearts of men; for as he implants nothing by his own influence, so God supplies what is necessary that he may fulfill his office.

By saying that he would turn the *hearts of fathers to sons and of sons to fathers*,^{f77} he points out not a simple union or consent, for men often unite together, and yet God reprobates and hates their union; but the Prophet here has in view the origin of the people, even Abraham and other holy patriarchs. Had he spoken of the Egyptians or the Assyrians, or some other nations, this turning would not have been so wonderful; but when he speaks of the holy and chosen race, it is no wonder that he mentions it as an instance of the ineffable kindness of God, that they were all to be gathered and restored from discord to unity, so as to become united in one faith.

Since their mutual consent is the subject, we must come to the fountain; for Malachi takes it for granted, that there was formerly true religion in that people, that the true worship of God prevailed among them, and that they were bound together by a sacred bond; but since in course of time various notions rose among them, yea, monstrous dotages, since sincerity had become wholly corrupted, he now recalls them to their first condition, so that sons might unite in sentiment with their fathers, and fathers also with their sons, and become one in that faith which had been delivered in the law.

Were any to object and say, that it was not reasonable that fathers should join themselves to their apostate sons, for this would be to approve of their defection, I answer, that there have been some converted young men who have shown the right way to their fathers, and have carried light before them. We indeed know that old men, as their are morose, not only reject what they hear from the young, but are rendered more obstinate, because they are ashamed to learn. Such a dispute the Prophet bids to be

dismissed, so that all might in their heart think only the same thing in the Lord.

Lest I come and smite the land with a curse. Here again the Prophet threatens the Jews, and indeed vehemently. He was constrained, as we have said, by necessity, for the torpor of that people was very great, and many of them were hardened in their perverseness. This is the reason why God now declares, that the Jews would not escape unpunished for despising the coming of Christ. And we are at the same time reminded how abominable in the sight of God is the ingratitude of not receiving his Son whom he sends to us. If we wish to derive benefit from what the Prophet teaches us, we ought especially to welcome Christ, while he so kindly calls us, yea, allures us to himself. But if the sloth of our flesh keeps us back, let even this threatening stimulate us; and as we learn that the sin of not embracing Christ when he offers himself to us, shall not go unpunished, let us struggle against our tardiness. At all events, let us take heed to kiss the Son, as in ^{<190212>}Psalm 2:12, we are exhorted to do.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as nothing is omitted by thee to help us onward in the course of our faith, and as our sloth is such that we hardly advance one step though stimulated by thee, — O grant, that we may strive to profit more by the various helps which thou hast provided for us, so that the Law, the Prophets, the voice of John the Baptist, and especially the doctrine of thine only-begotten Son, may more fully awaken us, that we may not only hasten to him, but also proceed constantly in our course, and persevere in it until we shall at length obtain the victory and the crown of our calling, as thou hast promised an eternal inherence in heaven to all who faint not but wait for the coming of the great Redeemer. — Amen.

**THE END OF ALL THE LECTURES OF JOHN CALVIN ON THE
MINOR PROPHETS**

Τῷ Θεῷ δοξα.

TO GOD THE GLORY

A TRANSLATION OF

CALVIN'S VERSION OF

THE BOOK OF MALACHI.

CHAPTER 1

- 1 The burden of the word of Jehovah on Israel, by Malachi, —
- 2 I have loved you, saith Jehovah; But ye have said, In what hast thou loved us? Was not Esau a brother to Jacob? saith Jehovah;
- 3 Yet I loved Jacob, and Esau I hated: And I have set his mountains a waste And his heritage for the serpents of the desert.
- 4 If Edom shall say, “We have been diminished, But we shall return and build houses;” *Yet* thus saith Jehovah of hosts, — “They shall build, but I will pull down;” And they shall be called, “The border of ungodliness,” And, “The people with whom Jehovah is angry forever:”
- 5 And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, — Magnified let Jehovah be throughout the border of Israel.
- 6 A son honours his father, and a servant his master: If then I be a father, where is my honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear? Saith Jehovah of hosts to you, priests, Who despise my name: But ye have said, In what have we despised thy name?
- 7 Ye offer on my altar polluted bread: Ye have also said, By what have we polluted thee? When ye say, The table of Jehovah, It is contemptible.

- 8** When ye offer the blind for sacrifice, it is no evil! And when the lame and the sick ye offer, it is no evil! Offer it now I pray to thy governor; Will he be pleased with thee, or accept Thy person, saith Jehovah of hosts?
- 9** And now I pray entreat the favour of God! And merciful will he be to us! By your hand has this been done; Will he regard your persons? Saith Jehovah of hosts.
- 10** Who is there even among you who closes the doors? And do ye not kindle my altar in vain? I delight not in you saith Jehovah of hosts, And an offering I will not receive from your hand.
- 11** Verily, from the rising of the sun to its setting Great shall be my name among the nations. And in every place incense shall be offered To my name, and a pure offering; For great shall be my name among the nations, Saith Jehovah of hosts.
- 12** But ye have profaned it by saying, The table of Jehovah is polluted, Its provision is his contemptible food. (505)
- 13** Ye have also said, Behold weariness? And ye have snuffed at it, saith Jehovah of hosts; And offered the torn and the lame and the sick, And brought an oblation! Shall I accept this from your hand, Saith Jehovah? (508)
- 14** But cursed be the deceitful, Who, having in his flock a male, Vows and offers what is corrupt to Jehovah For a great king am I, Saith Jehovah of hosts, And my name is terrible among the nations.

CHAPTER 2

- 1** And not to you is this command, O priests;
- 2** If ye will not hear not lay it to heart, To give glory to my name, Saith Jehovah of hosts, I will send on you a curse, And will curse your blessings; Yea, I have cursed them, Because ye lay it not to heart.

- 3** Behold, I will destroy your seed And scatter dung on your faces, The dung of your solemn feasts; And it shall take you to itself: And ye shall know,
- 4** That I have sent to you this command, That my covenant may be with Levi, Saith Jehovah of hosts.
- 5** My covenant with him was that of life and peace; And I gave him fear, and he feared me, And before my name he was humble; (524)
- 6** The law of truth was in his mouth, And iniquity was not found in his lips; In peace and uprightness he walked before me, And many he restored from iniquity.
- 7** Verily the lips of the priest should keep knowledge, And the law should they seek from his mouth, For the messenger of Jehovah of hosts is he:
- 8** But ye have departed from the way, To stumble have ye made many in the law; Ye have therefore violated the covenant of Levi, Saith Jehovah of hosts:
- 9** Therefore have I also made you Contemptible and base before all the people, As ye have not kept my ways And had respect of persons in the law.
- 10** Is there not one father to us all? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal falsely, every one with his brother? So as to pollute the covenant of our fathers.
- 11** Perfidiously has Judah acted, And abomination has been done In Israel and in Jerusalem; For polluted hath Judah (544) The holiness of Jehovah, which he loved, And hath married the daughter of another god.
- 12** Cut off will Jehovah The man who doeth this, The prompter and the respondent, From the tabernacles of Jacob; And him who bringeth an oblation to Jehovah of hosts.

- 13** And this have ye in the second place done — Covering with tears the altar of Jehovah, With weeping and with wailing, Because there is no more regard to the offering, And no receiving of what is acceptable from you hand.
- 14** And ye have said, Why is this? Because Jehovah has been witness Between thee and the wife of thy youth; With whom thou hast dealt unfaithfully, When yet she is thy consort, And the wife of thy covenant.
- 15** But did he not make one? And had he not an exuberance of spirit? And why one? That he might seek [secure] good seed. Therefore watch over your spirit; And with the wife of thy youth Deal not thou unfaithfully.
- 16** For if thou hatest, dismiss, Saith Jehovah, God of Israel; For he covers violence with his garment, Saith Jehovah of hosts: Therefore watch over you spirit, And deal not unfaithfully.
- 17** Ye have wearied Jehovah with your words; But ye have said, How have we wearied him? By saying, Whosoever doeth evil Is acceptable in the eyes of Jehovah, And in them he takes delight; Or, Where is the God of judgment?

CHAPTER 3

- 1** Behold I will send my messenger, And he will clear the way before me: And presently he shall come to his temple, The Lord whom ye seek, Even the messenger of the covenant whom ye desire; Behold, he cometh, saith Jehovah of hosts.
- 2** But who will endure the day of his coming? And who will stand when he appears. For he will be like a purifying fire And like the herb of the fullers:
- 3** And he shall sit as the purifier and cleanser of silver, And he will cleanse the sons of Levi, And fuse them as silver and gold,

- 4** That they may offer to Jehovah An offering in righteousness;
And acceptable to Jehovah Shall be the offering of Judah and
Jerusalem, As in the days of old, as in former years.
- 5** I will also draw nigh to you for judgment, And will be a swift
witness Against the sorcerers and the adulterers And those who
swear to a falsehood, And who withhold the wages of the
hireling, And wrong the widow, the orphan, and the stranger,
And who fear not me, saith Jehovah of hosts.
- 6** Because I am Jehovah, I change not; Therefore ye sons of Jacob
are not consumed.
- 7** From the days of your fathers Ye have turned from my statutes
and have not kept them; Return to me, and I will return to you,
Saith Jehovah of hosts: But ye have said, How are we to return?
- 8** Will a man rob the gods? (585) But ye have robbed me: yet ye
have said, In what have we robbed thee? In the tithes and in the
offerings.
- 9** With a curse are ye cursed, For ye have robbed me, the whole of
the nation.
- 10** Bring ye all the tithes to the store-house, And let there be food
in my house; And prove me now by this, Saith Jehovah of
hosts, Whether I will not open for you The windows of heaven,
And draw out for you a blessing, Until there be a
superabundance:
- 11** I will also restrain for you the devourer, That he may not
destroy the fruit of your land; And not fruitless will be the vine
for you in the field, Saith Jehovah of hosts.
- 12** Then blessed shall all nations call you, For ye shall be a land of
delight, Saith Jehovah of hosts.
- 13** Strong against me have been your words, Saith Jehovah of hosts:
But ye have said, In what have we spoken against thee? Ye have
said, Vain it is to serve God,
- 14** And what profit is it, That we have kept his charge, And that
we have walked humbly Before Jehovah of hosts:

- 15 And now happy we call the proud; yea, built up are they who do iniquity, And those who tempt God, and they are delivered.
- 16 Then spake those who feared Jehovah, Every one to his friend; And hearken did Jehovah and hear, And written was a book of remembrance Before him, for those who feared Jehovah And who thought on his name:
- 17 And they shall be to me, saith Jehovah of hosts, In the day which I appoint, a peculiar treasure; And I will spare them, As a man spares his son who serves him.
- 18 Then ye shall return and see the difference Between the righteous and the ungodly, Between him who serves God And him who does not serve him.

CHAPTER 4

- 1 For behold the day! it comes burning as an oven And all the proud and all who do iniquity Shall be stubble; And burn them up shall the day that is coming, Saith Jehovah of hosts; For it shall leave them neither root nor branch.
- 2 But arise to you, who fear my name, Shall the sun of righteousness, With healing in its beams; And ye shall go forth and leap, Like fattened calves:
- 3 And ye shall tread down the ungodly, For they shall be dust under the soles of your feet, In the day which I appoint, Saith Jehovah of hosts.
- 4 Remember the law of Moses my servant Which I committed to him on Horeb, For all Israel, *even* the statutes and judgments.
- 5 Behold I send to you Elijah the prophet, Before it comes, the day of Jehovah, great and terrible;
- 6 And he shall turn the heart of fathers to *their* sons, And the heart of sons to their fathers; Lest I come and smite the land with a curse.

FOOTNOTES

PREFACE TO MALACHI

^{ft1} “It is probable that he was contemporary with Nehemiah. Compare <390211> Malachi 2:11 with <161323> Nehemiah 13:23-27; and <390308> Malachi 3:8, with <161310> Nehemiah 13:10.”—*Newcome*. He must then be several years after ZECHARIAH, who began his Prophecy in the second year of Darius Hystaspes, about sixteen years after the first return from captivity, and NEHEMIAH returned from Persia in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, about ninety years after the first return, and about seventy-four year after ZECHARIAH began to prophesy.—*Ed.*

CHAPTER 1

^{ft2} The order of the words in the original gives a peculiar emphasis to the sentence—

Was it not a brother that Esau was to Jacob?

The *Welsh* will express it word for word—

Onid brawd oedd Esau i Jacob?

These two verses may be thus rendered—

2. “I have loved you,” saith Jehovah; But ye say, “How hast thou loved us?”— “Was not Esau a brother to Jacob,” saith Jehovah?

3. “Yet I loved Jacob, and Esau I hated; And I have set his mountains a waste, And his heritage for the serpents of the desert.”—*Ed.*

^{ft3} It is rather an ironical language, as it will appear from the following literal version—

8. And when ye bring the blind for a sacrifice, no evil! And when ye bring the lame and the sick, no evil! Offer, it, I pray, to thy

governor; Will he be pleased with thee or accept thy person, Saith Jehovah of hosts?

The whole is in the strain of irony; and the first lines are much more striking than when the interrogative particle is introduced. So is the rendering of the *Septuagint*, οὐ κακὸν —no evil. It was the *Targum* that introduced the interrogative form.—*Ed.*

^{Ft4} So ought this sentence to be rendered; and it is thus rendered by *Newcome*, only for “contemptible” he has “despicable,” while *Henderson* retains the former, as it is in our version.—*Ed.*

^{Ft5} It is generally admitted that this verse is ironical. The second line has been differently interpreted: some regard the impure sacrifices before mentioned as being referred to, “from your hand have these come,” following the *Septuagint*, where תָּנִי is rendered “ταυτα —these:” but the most obvious meaning is that given by *Calvin*, that the sentence is a concession as to what the priests are ironically exhorted to do. I give the following version,—

And now, intreat now God’s face that he may favor us; By you (*literally* by your hand) has this been done: Will he on your account lift up the face? Saith Jehovah of hosts.

To “lift up the face” is to show favor. The words seem to be spoken by the Prophet, and by saying, “saith Jehovah,” at the end, he identifies what he says with the mind of God, as though he said that what he addressed to them was communicated to him from above. Instead of כִּכְּמֶ, “on your account,” some MS., have כִּלְכֶ, “for you,” or “for your sake.”—*Ed.*

^{Ft6} Adopted by *Jerome*, *Cyril*, and in our version, and by *Henry*, *Scott*, *Adam Clarke*, and *Henderson*. But *Marckius* takes another view, previously taken by *Drusius*, *Gataker*, and *Cocceius*, according to the following version—

Who is there moreover among you? let him even close the doors,
That ye may not kindle my altar in vain.

“What he seems to say is this,” observes *Drusius*, “I wish there were some one so inflamed by a pious zeal, as to close the doors, and thus to exclude all unlawful sacrifices.” To kindle or light the altar was to

light the fire under it to consume the sacrifice. The *Targum* favors “in vain,” or to no purpose, “Offer ye not on my altar an execrable oblation.” The word **לֵאֵלֶיךָ** is used in both senses—“for nothing” or without gain, ^{<012915>}Genesis 29:15; ^{<022102>}Exodus 21:2,—and “in vain” or uselessly, ^{<200127>}Proverbs 1:27; ^{<260610>}Ezekiel 6:10.

It is difficult to know which of these views is the right one. What seems against our version is the negative **לֹא** in the second line. The sense given would be better brought out without it; and so *Jerome* leaves it out in his explanation. The form also of the sentence being changed renders it improbable that **לֵאֵלֶיךָ** belongs to the former clause. The version of *Drusius* comes nearest to the original, and is countenanced by the *Septuagint* and the *Targum*.—*Ed.*

^{Ft7} Literally it is—“Not to me *is* delight in you,” *i.e.*, I have no delight in you.—*Ed.*

^{Ft8} The verse begins with **וְכֵן**, which *Calvin* suggests may be rendered “certe—surely,” or verily; and this would be most suitable here—*Verily, from the rising of the sun to it setting, Great shall be my name among the nations; And in every place incense shall be brought To my name, and a pure offering: Verily, great shall be my name Among the nations, saith Jehovah of hosts.*

The *Septuagint* render the first part as past, “glorified has been my name;” and the second in the present, “is brought.” But the future is intended, as the last verb is in that tense, “I will not accept:” for when there is no verb in a sentence, and the auxiliary verb is understood, as is often the case in Hebrew, the tense is regulated by the context. “I will not accept your offering, but an offering shall be brought to me,” and has been or is, but shall be.—*Ed.*

^{Ft9} As an instance of a gradual deviation from the truth, *Justin Martyr*, in the second century, rendered the word “incense,” **θυσια**, a sacrifice, while in the *Septuagint* it is **θυμιαμα**, incense.

^{Ft10} And what is offered thereon, *even* its food, is despicable.—*Newcome*. This is nearly the version of the *Septuagint*.

And its fruit, even his food, is contemptible.—**Henderson**.

The table of Jehovah, polluted it is and his (or, its) fruit; contemptible is his (or, its) food.—**Marckius**.

The last comes nearest to the original, and is the most obvious construction. The verse may be thus rendered:

But ye profane it by saying, “The table of Jehovah, Polluted is it and its fruit, Contemptible is its food.”—*Ed.*

^{ft11} Variety of meanings has been given to the word **מתלאה**. *Calvin* takes it as one word with two letters added to **לאה**, to be weary or tired. But *Drusius*, *Marckius*, *Parkhurst*, *Henderson*, and others, regard it as a contraction for **מה** and **תלאה**, according to some other instances in Hebrew, and render it “What weariness!” and this corresponds with the context more than any other view. The *Septuagint* and the *Targum* considered the **מ** as a preposition, and this mistake has been followed by *Jerome* and the fathers, and also by *Grotius* and *Newcome*. “Behold, from weariness,” or from labor, or from affliction: and it has been regarded as an excuse made by the priests on account of their poor and depressed condition. But there is nothing to countenance this notion in the context.

Calvin adopted the past tense in this and the preceding verse, and so has *Henderson*; but *Marckius* and *Newcome*, with more correctness, render the verbs in the present tense, for they are all in this verse preceded by a conversive **ל**, *vau*; and the last line shows that the present time is intended,—

13. And ye say, “What weariness!” And ye snuff at it, saith Jehovah of hosts; And ye bring the torn, and the lame, and the sick, When ye bring an offering: Shall I accept it from your hand, saith Jehovah?

There are two evils ascribed to the priests—they were discontented with their office and performed it as a drudgery—and they allowed forbidden victims to be offered.

“Offering,” **מנחה**, signifies a gift or a present, whether a victim or meat-offering. See ^{<010402>}Genesis 4:2-5. Here evidently it comprehends “the torn,” “the lame,” etc., as it is clear from the words, “Shall I accept it?” that is, the offering, including those specified; for if it meant a meat-offering, as some suppose, non-acceptance would be confined to it alone.—*Ed.*

Ft12 Rendered “illustrious—**ἐπιφανὲς**,” by the *Septuagint*,—“powerful,” by the *Targum*,—“dreadful—horrible,” by *Jerome*,—“terrible—terrible,” by *Marckius*,—“shall be feared,” by *Henderson*,—“shall be had in reverence,” by *Newcome*, and the same with *Drusius*, “reverendum.” The word is literally “to be feared,” **נִרְאָה**; it is often rendered “terrible,” what causes dread or terror. Some take the present tense, “my name is terrible,” *i.e.*, is dreaded on account of my greatness, manifested by my judgments. But if we take the future, then we must render the words—“my name shall be feared” or revered.—*Ed.*

CHAPTER 2

ft13 It is “your blessing” in one MS., in the *Septuagint*, the *Targum*, and *Arabic*; and this reading is confirmed by “it” in the next line. By “blessing,” says *Newcome*, “is meant the portion of the priests:” and as the priests are especially addressed, this is probable.—*Ed.*

Ft14 The word **זרע**, means “the shoulder” as well as “seed,” and it is so rendered by the *Septuagint*, and the *Arabic*, and also by *Grotius* and *Newcome*,—

Behold, I will withhold from you the shoulder.

The shoulder belonged to the priests, see ^{<030732>} Leviticus 7:32; ^{<051803>} Deuteronomy 18:3. This rendering suits the context better than the other.—*Ed.*

Ft15 Participles and vers are often connected by “and” in Hebrew, and so in Welsh; but then the auxiliary is understood. Such is the case here, and the *Septuagint* have so regarded it, “**καὶ λήψομαι ὑμας εἰς τὸ** ^{αὐτό}— and I will take you to the same.”—*Ed.*

Ft16 That any covenant may remain with Levi.—*Newcome*. This seems to be the sense. He sent “this command,” or this message, as **מִצְוָה** may be rendered here, in order that by reforming his sons his covenant might remain in force, for disobedience on their part would abrogate it, as it was a conditional covenant.—*Ed.*

Ft17 That we may understand these terms we must have recourse to the case evidently alluded to, that of Phinehas, in ^{<042512>} Numbers

25:12,13. God promised to him the covenant of peace and of perpetual priesthood—of peace, that is, of reconciliation, because God through the zeal displayed by Phinehas became reconciled to the children of Israel—and of perpetuity as to the priesthood, signified here by life or “lives,” as the word is plural.—*Ed.*

Ft18 *Calvin's* copy must have had the verb to “give” without the affix □, as it is in two MS., and according to the *Septuagint*, the *Targum*, and the *Arabic*. But even in this case the meaning given can hardly be defended: for פֶּחַח, which occurs elsewhere about eleven times, has not the sense here assigned to it. It means fear in the sense of dread or terror, the fear which arises from the apprehension of displeasure or wrath, the fear which a servant has for his master, as in 1:6, where this very word occurs. The idea expressed by *Calvin* is the same with that of the *Targum*, and adopted also by *Grotius*; and the meaning given is, “the doctrine of the law.” But that it means fear here, the fear of majesty and the fear of wrath, is evident from the whole context. The subject at the end of the last chapter is the fear inspired by God’s greatness, and the conclusion of this verse is sufficiently express.

The □ after the verb “gave” is no doubt the right reading, as it exists in all MS., except two. Then comes the difficulty of construction. There is one MS. which has □ before “fear,” and the *Septuagint* have επι, *for*, or, *on account of*, before it. This removes the difficulty, and the meaning will be found consistent with the facts of the case alluded to, and with the general tenor of this passage. The verse then would run this—

5. My covenant with him was that of life and peace, And I gave them to him on account of *his* fear; For he feared me, And at the presence of my name he was terrified.

The last verb is the Nihil of פָּחַח, which means to break, and to be broken, and hence to be broken in mind by fear and dread, to be dismayed or terrified. “Dismayed” is the rendering *Newcome*, and “stood in awe” is that of *Henderson*. It is rendered “discouraged” in <050121> Deuteronomy 1:21, but it ought to be “terrified” or “dismayed,” as in <240117> Jeremiah 1:17; <260206> Ezekiel 2:6; 3:9.

“At the presence of my name,” seems to mean the same thing as “at my presence.”—*Ed.*

Fr19 “The fear of God,” says *Cocceius*, “which was in the first priests, is more fully declared by its effects, which are twofold—sayings and doings. The doctrine of truth was in their mouth; they taught the truth, they were not silent, but sincerely taught it, without admiring what was false; for what is false is injustice, and it is the truth set forth either in a perverted form, or by addition, or by diminution. As to doings, they walked in peace, they did not rebel against God, nor did they seek devious and crooked ways, but walked in a strait course.”

The word **עוֹלָה** is rendered “unrighteousness, or, injustice — **ἀδικία**,” by the *Septuagint* and the *Targum*,—“*falsitas, falseness*,” by *Drusius*,—and “iniquity” by many. There being no agreement in gender between it and the verb “formed,” *Marckius* suggests that **דָּבַר** is understood, “the word of iniquity,” etc.—*Ed.*

Fr20 The verbs, as here rendered, are future: but being preceded by **כִּי**, many consider them as declaring what *ought* to be: and they are thus rendered by *Drusius*, *Dathius*, *Newcome*, and *Henderson*, “should keep,” or “ought to keep,” etc. We find the future thus used when preceded by **אִם**, “whether,” in ^{<263402>}Ezekiel 34:2; and when preceded by no particle, as in ^{<390106>}Malachi 1:6, where the version ought clearly to be,—

*A son should honor a father,
And a servant, his Lord.*

This use of the future, as designating a duty or obligation, is much more frequent in Hebrew than what is commonly supposed.—*Ed.*

Fr21 “At the law” is our version, and that of *Newcome*, who adds, “By offering blemished sacrifices.” *Henderson* has “in the law.” They departed from the *way* prescribed in the law, and caused others to fall or stumble in it, that is, in the way which the law pointed out. The way, says *Drusius*, is the law itself. To stumble in the law is to transgress it.

For “causing to stumble,” the *Septuagint* have “ye have weakened—**ησθενήσατε**;” *Sym.* and *Theodoret*, “ye have caused to stumble—**εσκανδαλίσατε**;” and so the *Vulgate*. *Dathius* gives this paraphrase—“ye have caused many to sin against the law.”—*Ed.*

Fr22 The verb means to corrupt, and also to destroy or to make void. The *Septuagint* give the first meaning, “ye have corrupted—**διεφθείρατε**,”

and *Jerome* the second, “ye have made void—irritum fecistis.” *Marckius* and *Henderson* have the first word, and *Newcome* the second, which is more suitable when applied to a covenant, though not when applied to “ways.” To “make void,” is also the most appropriate when it refers to wisdom, as in ^{<263207>}Ezekiel 32:7.—*Ed.*

Fi23 Striking and remarkable are the words of *Adam Clarke* on this verse, “See what happened to the truly abominable priesthood of France and Rome, 1796-8. They were the sole cause of that infidelity that brought to supply by grimace, paltry superstition, and jesuitical cunning, what they want in purity of morals, soundness of doctrine, and unction from God. *They must mend, or look for another revolution.*”

Fi24 “Having one decision for the poor and another for the rich. See Leviticus 29:15.”—*Newcome*; or, as *Jerome* says, “Despising the just when poor, and honoring the unjust when rich.”—*Ed.*

Fi25 This is the view taken by most—*Jerome*, *Theodoret*, *Drusius*, *Grotius*, *Marckius*, and *Henry*. *Henderson* has been led astray by a supposed parallelism between this and the next sentence; and he regards God to be meant. *Scott* has taken it in both views, but this is not to explain the passage. Indeed the very argument here used renders it necessary that Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, should be intended. Taking God to be meant by “father,” some have been led to think that it is the language of the Jews who married strange wives, in their own defense, “Have we not all, Gentiles as well as Jews, one Father? and has not the same God created me?” This might do well until we come to the conclusion of the verse, where the violation of the *covenant* of the fathers is mentioned.—*Ed.*

Fi26 The word בָּגַד, as a noun, which is its root, means a robe, a cloak, or a covering; when used as a verb, it signifies to cover or cloak things over, and so to act falsely, hypocritically, or treacherously. *Drusius*’ definition is, to act perfidiously, to prevaricate, to deceive. It is rendered here improperly by the *Septuagint* “εγκατέλιπετε—ye have forsaken.” It is here in the future tense, and may be rendered as though it were in the subjunctive mood,—

*Why should we act perfidiously, each one with his brother,
By violating the covenant of our fathers?*

“Violating” is **חלל**, which means to perforate, to pierce, and to break in, so as to violate a holy place, and hence to profane; and so it is rendered by the *Septuagint*—**του βεβηλωσαι**. To profane one’s word in ^{<043002>}Numbers 30:2, is to break it; and to profane a covenant in ^{<195520>}Psalms 55:20, is to break it; and so it is rendered in both these places in our version. To *break* a covenant is a metaphor not very unlike that of *piercing* or *perforating* it. *Newcome* says that it refers to the ancient mode of cancelling bonds, which was done by striking a nail through them. See ^{<510214>}Colossians 2:14. “Hence the word,” he adds, “signifies to *make void*.”—*Ed*.

Fi27 It is **בגדה** in the feminine gender, because by Judah is meant the tribe or the family; so Ephraim is often regarded. See ^{<280418>}Hosea 4:18; 5:9; 9:13. We find here Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem mentioned; and probably because the purpose was to include the whole of the people, as some of Israel or of the ten tribes were among them.—*Ed*.

Fi28 This last clause has been variously explained: “whom,” *i.e.*, Judah, “he loved,” or, “which,” *i.e.*, holiness, “he loved,” or, “which he,” Judah “had loved.” The last seems the most natural construction according to the tenor of the passage, if **אשר** be a relative; for Judah is the subject in the sentence. Judah did in former times love and delight in that separating which God had made and appointed between his people and the heathen world. To say that God loved it seems an odd idea; but to say that Judah delighted in it was much to the purpose, and added it for the sake of enhancing the guilt of that generation.

Dathius gives this version,—

For he profanes Judah, the holiness of Jehovah, Who loves and marries a foreign wife.

But more suitable to the genius of the language would be this,—
For profaned has Judah the holiness of Jehovah, Because he has loved and married The daughter of a strange God.

The word **אשר** is often a conjunction as well as a relative; *because, for, inasmuch as*. See ^{<013413>}Genesis 34:13; ^{<053016>}Deuteronomy 30:16; ^{<091515>}1 Samuel 15:15.—*Ed*.

Fi29 “The holiness of Jehovah,” *i.e.*, the holiness required and enjoined by Jehovah. Most agree that what is meant is the separation from any

alliance with heathens. See ^{<050703>}Deuteronomy 7:3. Ezra mentions Israel as “the holy seed,” ^{<150902>}Ezra 9:2. See also ^{<240203>}Jeremiah 2:3. *Marckius*, after *Jerome* and *Cyril*, takes this view, and so do *Henry*, *Scott*, *Newcome*, and *Henderson*.—*Ed.*

F130

***Him that teacheth and him that answereth.*—Newcome.**

or,

***Him that passeth out and him that returneth.*—Ib.**

***Him that watcheth and him that answereth.*—Henderson.**

***The teacher and the scholar.*—Drusius and Grotius.**

The most literal rendering is,—

The rouser and the respondent, ער וענה.

It seems to mean the leader in the faction and his assistant, the bold answer of his wickedness and his timid follower. Such we find to be in all factions.—*Ed.*

F131 It is not easy to give a version of this verse. *Henderson* renders the first line thus—

And this ye have done the second time.

The reference is, he says, to the repetition of the evil which had been corrected under Ezra 9 and 10. This seems probable; but we may view this “second,” or again, with regard to the previous denunciations. What are regarded as verbs in the infinitive mood are in my view participial nouns; the last, לקחה, is evidently so. Then the literal rendering would be this—

And this again ye do— Covering with tears the altar, Weeping and groaning, Because *there* is no more turning to the offering, Or the receiving of what is acceptable from your hand.

That מֵאִין is to be rendered “because not,” or, “inasmuch as not,” is evident from other places. See ^{<241006>}Jeremiah 10:6; 19:11. “Turning” signifies having a regard to. “What is acceptable,” רָצוֹן, is rendered “δεκτον—acceptable,” in the *Septuagint*; “εὐδοκίαν—good-will,” by *Aq.*; “τὸ εὐδοκημένον—what is approved,” by *Sym.*; “τέλειον—perfect,” by *Theodoret*.

The difference between *Calvin* and most expositors after him, as well as before him, is, that he regarded the lamentation to have been by the priests and people, and they by the repudiated wives. The cause of the weeping, as stated here, was the rejection of the offerings, as declared by the Prophet; and this seems enough to confirm *Calvin's* view.

The priests and people had been denounced for their wickedness, especially for marrying strange wives. After this denunciation they “again” went to the altar and wept because God would not receive their sacrifices; and they did this without amending their ways. Then in the next verse the Prophet explains why God would not receive their offerings.—*Ed.*

Ft32 Or, “a witness has Jehovah been between thee and thy wife.” But *Theodoret*, *Cyril*, and *Jerome*, and also *Cocceius*, refer this to God’s testimony in the first institution of marriage, in ^{<010224>}Genesis 2:24. More suitable to the context no doubt is to consider God as a witness to the marriage contract; and this is the view taken by *Drusius*, *Henry*, *Scott*, *Newcome*, and *Henderson*.—*Ed.*

Ft33 “**Κοινωνός**—partner,” by the *Septuagint*; “**ὁμόσαρκος**—of the same flesh,” by *Cyril*; “particeps—partner,” by *Jerome*; “companion,” in our version, and by *Newcome* and *Henderson*. The word comes from **רָבַח**, to conjoin, to couple, to fit together. “Partner” perhaps would be the most appropriate term.—*Ed.*

Ft34 The position of the words shows that it is a question, for there is no interrogative particle. So it is in our language, “Has he not made one?” And that it is a question, is evident from what follows, “and by one?”—*Ed.*

Ft35 This is the most lucid and satisfactory explanation of a text which has been deemed, and is still deemed by some, difficult. Some moderns have gone back to the track of the ancients, but needlessly. *Newcome's* attempt at a revision of the text is wholly useless, and renders the passage more abstruse.—*Ed.*

Ft36 This is not strictly correct, see ^{<052402>}Deuteronomy 24:2; and our Savior allows that Moses “suffered” the Israelites to put away their wives, though he says that it was for the hardness of their hearts. See ^{<401908>}Matthew 19:8.—*Ed.*

Ft37 The interpretation given of the first clause of this verse is according to the *Septuagint* and the *Targum*, and has been adopted by *Cyril, Jerome, Theodoret, Drusius, Grotius, Dathius*, and others. Our version is derived from *Jun. and Trem., and Piscator*, and has been followed by *Marckius, Lowth, Scott, Adam Clarke, Newcome, and Henderson*. The second clause has been variously interpreted both by the ancients and the moderns. The *Septuagint* make “violence,” or wrong, the nominative to “cover,” and the *Targum* the accusative. “Iniquity shall cover his garment,” is the version of *Jerome*. “For he covers violence as with his garments,” has been the version of others; which corresponds with the *Targum*, as the former does with the *Septuagint*. The most natural construction of the first part is no doubt what our version exhibits; the meaning of the second is less obvious: but they seem connected. What seems to be said is,—that God hates the divorcer, and him also who maltreats his wife without divorcing her. Then we may give this literal rendering,—
For he hates the divorcer, (or him who puts away,) Saith Jehovah, the God of Israel; And the coverer of outrage on his own garment, Saith Jehovah of hosts.

To speak of God here in the third person is in accordance with the preceding verses. “His own garment,” according to *Venema, Dathius, and Henderson*, is a figurative designation of a wife. See ^{<080309>}Ruth 3:9; ^{<261608>}Ezekiel 16:8.

The condemning of divorce is more suitable to this place, than any reference to its permission; because in the previous part the allusion is evidently made to the first institution of marriage, and not to any posterior modification.—*Ed.*

Ft38 There is a stronger word employed by the *Septuagint*—
“**παρωξύναμεν**—have we irritated, *or*, provoked.”—*Ed.*

Ft39 Some have contended that from the order in which the words occur, the rendering ought to be as follows—
Whosoever makes evil good in the eyes of Jehovah, Even in them he delights. (See ^{<230520>}Isaiah 5:20.)

The *Septuagint* favor this version, as the word for “good,” **καλον**, is in the accusative case. But the usual rendering is the best—

Every doer of evil *is* good (approved) in the eyes of Jehovah, And in them he delights.

Cocceius observes on these words—“None are so impiously bold as actually to express such words, but Scripture is wont to ascribe to the wicked such expressions as are suitable to their character.”—*Ed.*

CHAPTER 3

^{f40} “The God of righteousness—δικαιοσύνης,” is the version of the *Septuagint*.—*Ed.*

^{ft41} As quoted by the Evangelists, it is “before *thy* face.” *Jerome*’s observation is, that the apostles and evangelists transferred the truth contained in passages without minding syllables and small words.—*Ed.*

^{ft42} The verb פננ, rendered “purgabit” by *Calvin* in the sense of clearing, can hardly bear this meaning. It signifies to turn or look to a thing, and hence to provide or prepare. In this latter sense it occurs in six other places; and is rendered by the *Septuagint* ἐτοιμάζω, as in ^{<012431>} Genesis 24:31, and ^{<234003>} Isaiah 40:3, though here ἐπιβλέπεται, according to its primary meaning. The version of *Theodoret*, here is “ἐτοιμαζει—prepares.” The idea of *Calvin* may be said to be included; for as *Henderson* justly observes, “The language is borrowed from the custom of sending pioneers before an eastern monarch to cut through rocks and forests, and remove every impediment that might obstruct his course.”—*Ed.*

^{ft43} “Ἐξαίφνης—suddenly,” by the *Septuagint*, “statim—immediately,” by *Jerome*, and by some others, “unexpectedly.” The meaning is, according to some, that his coming would be soon after that of John, about six months; or, according to others, unexpectedly, as a light suddenly arising in darkness, without any previous symptom of its appearance.

The literal rendering of these two lines is the following,—

*And suddenly shall he come to his temple,
The Lord whom ye are seeking.*

The remark of *Henderson* and of others on the ל before “Lord” as being emphatic, is not well founded. It is owing to the relative “whom” which follows, as it is in our language.—*Ed.*

Ft44 “A phrase nowhere else in Scripture.”—*Secker.*

Ft45 Owing to this repetition, some of the fathers, *Theodoret, Eusebius,* and *Augustine,* held that this part refers to Christ’s second coming: but the repetition is only to confirm what had been previously said, and according to the usual manner of the Prophets, contains an expansion of the former idea. A literal rendering of the whole verse would exhibit this as the real meaning,—

Behold I send my messenger, And he shall prepare the way before me: And suddenly shall he come to his temple, The Lord whom ye are seeking; Yea, the angel of the covenant, in whom ye delight, Behold, he is coming, saith Jehovah of hosts.

The four last lines exhibit an example of parallelism which often occurs. The first and the last line correspond, and so do the second and the third.—*Ed.*

Ft46 For “who will endure,” the *Vulgate,* after *Jerome,* has, “quis poterit cogitare—who can think of?” etc. But this is inconsistent with the *Septuagint* and the *Targum,* and with the context. The verb indeed is capable of being derived from כל as well as from יכל; but the latter is the meaning alone suitable to this passage.—*Ed.*

Ft47 The version of the *Septuagint* is “ὡς πυρ χωνευτηρίου και ὡς ποιά πλυνό-
πτων —as the fire of the crucible (or, of the furnace) and as the herb of the washers.” The word, מצרף, may be either a participle or a noun—the refiner or the place or instrument of refining. See <201703> Proverbs 17:3; 27:21. The latter sense is most suitable to this place. “Herb” is rendered “smegma—soap,” by *Picator,*—“*Lanaria-cudwort,*” by *Drusius,*—and “alkaline salt,” by *Michaelis.* It was probably the salt-wort mentioned by an author quoted by *Parkhurst,* a plant very common in Judea. It was burned, and water was poured on its ashes. This water became impregnated with strong lixivial salt, “proper for taking,” he says, “stains and impurities out of wool or cloth.” It is not supposed that what we call “soap” was known to the Jews.—*Ed.*

Ft48 “Fundet *vel* conflabit,” so he renders פָּרַי, which signifies to fuse, as given by the *Septuagint*, χέει. It properly means to strain off or separate, that is, wine from its lees, as in ^{<232506>}Isaiah 25:6; or, as here, the pure metal from its dross. It intimates such a process as is successful in separating the gold and silver from the base matter that may adhere to them. So that the “expurgans—cleansing” of *Piscator*, or the “defaecans—defecating or fining from dregs,” of *Junius* and *Tremelius*, very nearly expresses the idea. *Newcome* and *Henderson* translate this verb “refine,” as they do another verb, or rather participle, at the beginning of the verse. “He will strain them, (*colabit*,)” is the version of *Jerome*. Our version has “purge,” but “cleanse” is better. “Defacate” comes nearest to the original word. I would offer the following version—

3. And sit will the fuser and purifier of silver; And he will purify the sons of Levi, And draw off their dross as that of silver and gold; And they shall be to Jehovah The offerers of oblation in righteousness.

The paraphrase of *Dathius* is substantially faithful—

As the gold-finer (or goldsmith—*aurifaber*) and the purifier of silver sits, so he will purify the posterity of Levi, and will clarify (*eliquabit*) them as gold and silver, that they may rightly offer gifts to Jehovah.—*Ed.*

Ft49 Jurantes and fallandum—swear to deceive: the original literally is, “who swear to a lie,” or to a falsehood.—*Ed.*

Ft50 There is no need of this inversion, if we render the word פָּשַׁע, defraud, or rob, or deal wrongfully with, which is no doubt its secondary meaning,—

And against the robbers of the hireling’s hire, Of the widow, and of the fatherless, And those who oppress the stranger, And fear not me, saith Jehovah of hosts.

The *Septuagint* give the meaning of the word as above, ἀποστερουνται —defrauders, robbers, and supply “tyrannizers—καταδυναστεύοντας,” before “widow.”—*Ed.*

Fl51 The words may be so rendered as to allow the copulative ו its ordinary meaning. The verse contains two announcements bearing on the subject in hand,—

For I *am* Jehovah, I have not changed; And ye *are* the house of Jacob, ye have not been consumed.

This, I conceive, is the natural rendering of the original. God was not changed, because he was Jehovah; and they were not consumed, because they were the house of Jacob, a people in covenant with God.—*Ed.*

Fl52 The words are singular, “days,” being preceded by two prepositions, ל and מ, “to—from the days,” etc., which seems to mean, “To this time from the days of your fathers;” or it may mean, “To and from the days of your fathers, your immediate predecessors.”—*Ed.*

Fl53 Most differ from *Calvin* as to the word אלהים in this passage. The *Septuagint* render it “God—Θεον,” the Targum, “judges,” but commentators generally “God,” *i.e.*, the true God, supposing the audacity of the people to be here reprobated. The word for “defraud or rob,” is only found here and in ^{<202223>}Proverbs 22:23, and rendered “supplant” by the *Septuagint*, but “rob—αποστερησει,” by *Aq.* and *Sym.*, the only meaning consistent with the context.—*Ed.*

Fl54 Literally it is, “in the tenth (or, tithe) and the heave-offering.” The last word comes from מר, to raise or lift up, because this offering was raised or heaved, and thus presented as it were to the Lord. See ^{<022927>}Exodus 29:27,28. It is rendered “first-fruits” by the *Septuagint*.

Fl55 The words are expressive, for literally they are—
And me have ye robbed, the nation, the whole of it.—*Ed.*

Fl56 The literal rendering is—
Bring ye the whole of the tenth Into the house, the treasury, And let the prey be in my house.

That is—“Let what you rob me of, the prey, or plunder, be in my house.” The word is מר, properly prey, or plunder, and so rendered by the *Septuagint*, “διαπραγή—plunder.” It was the *Targum* that gave a wrong meaning to the word, which most have followed.—*Ed.*

Ft57 The verb in Hiphil, as it is here, is applied to the drawing forth of a sword or lance, ^{<021509>}Exodus 15:9, and to the drawing out of an army for battle, ^{<011414>}Genesis 14:14. It is rendered, “εκχεῶ—I will pour out, or forth,” by the *Septuagint*.—*Ed.*

Ft58 כָּדִי not only means sufficiency, but also what is necessary to suffice, demand, requirement, as in ^{<032526>}Leviticus 25:26, כָּדִי גְאֻלְתּוֹ, according to the demand of his redemption, or what was necessary or sufficient for his redemption. See ^{<052502>}Deuteronomy 25:2, where it means “according to what his sin may require,” or literally, “according to the requirement of his sin.” See also ^{<340213>}Nahum 2:13, גְרוֹתָיו כָּדִי, “for the demand of his whelps,” or, for what was necessary to suffice his whelps. There is a similar phrase to what we find here in ^{<197207>}Psalms 72:7, עַד בְּלִי יָרַח, “until no moon,” that is, until there be no moon. The literal rendering then of the phrase here would be, “until no demand,” that is, until nothing be required fully to suffice. Corresponding with this is the version of the *Septuagint* “ἕως τοῦ ἰκανωθῆναι —until there should be enough.”—*Ed.*

Ft59 There is no necessity for giving to שָׁבַל here any other than its ordinary meaning of bereaving or depriving. The reference is to depredators who bereaved or stripped the vine of its fruit—an evil common in a confused and disordered state of things.

The word לְכַמְּךָ, “on your account,” is repeated in this verse three times; and it has no doubt an emphatic meaning. What is intimate evidently is, that the evils promised here to be removed were on their account, *i.e.*, for their sins. I render the verse thus,—

And I will restrain on your account the devourer, And he shall not destroy on your account the fruit of the ground, And bereaved on your account shall not be the vine in the field, Saith the Lord of hosts.—*Ed.*

Ft60

Your words have waxen bold against me.—Newcome.

Your words against me have been hard.—Henderson.

Ye have made heavy (or, overcharged—ἐβαρύνατε) against me your words.—*Septuagint.*

To “grow strong” is the idea expressed by *Jerome* and *Marckius*; and it is the common meaning of the verb. “Strong of forehead” in ^{<260307>}Ezekiel 3:7, is rendered “impudent” in our version, and very justly. Impudence or insolence is what is here evidently meant,—
Insolent against me have been your words.—Ed.

^{Ft61} Rather, “What have we been talking together against thee? The verb is in Niphal, and only found so here, in the sixteenth verse, ^{<19B923>}Psalms 119:23, and ^{<263330>}Ezekiel 33:30. It denotes a mutual converse, a talking together, or a frequent converse.—*Ed.*

^{Ft62} The verse is differently arranged in our version, and by most interpreters. The first sentence is a general announcement, and what follows is an expansion and an illustration of that announcement—
14. Ye have said, “It is vain to serve God; For what profit is it that we have kept his charge, And that we have walked mournfully before Jehovah of hosts?”

15. We therefore now felicitate the proud; Even built up have been the workers of wickedness, They have even tempted God, and escaped.”

The word for “tempted” is **יָחַב**, which commonly means to try, to prove, to test a thing; but used here evidently in a bad sense: they presumptuously tried, as it were, the patience of God, and “escaped,” *i.e.*, from the punishment which they deserved.—*Ed.*

^{Ft63} “**Ἰκεταί**—suplicants,” by the *Septuagint*,—“tristes—sad,” by *Jerome*,—“with a depressed spirit,” by the *Targum*,—“mournfully,” in our version, and by *Newcome* and *Henderson*. The first meaning of the word is “black” or “dark;” but it is used to express grief, sorrow, or mourning. It is rendered “**σκυθρωπαζων**—being gloomy or sorrowful,” by the *Septuagint*, in ^{<193806>}Psalms 38:6; 42:9; 43:2. It is here used adverbially, and may be rendered either sorrowfully or mournfully. “The walking mournfully has reference to those going about in sackcloth and ashes, pretending to sorrow on account of their sins.”—*Henderson*.

“They walked mournfully before God,” observes *Henry*. “Whereas God had required them to serve him with gladness, and to walk cheerfully before him. They, by their own superstitions, made the

service of God a task and drudgery to themselves, and then complained of it as a hard service. The yoke of Christ is easy, it is the yoke of Antichrist that is heavy.”—*Ed.*

Ft64 *Leigh* says, that the verb, from which the word rendered here “proud” is derived, meant to *deal arrogantly, insolently, to be lifted up with swelling pride*. It is applied in ^{<19C405>} Psalm 124:5, to the swelling waves of the sea. To be insolent or presumptuous against God seems to be intended here.—*Ed.*

Ft65 Or, “talked together:” the verb is in Niphal, as we find it in verse 13. The good as well as the wicked talked together, mutually conversed, or talked often. The *Targum* renders it, “They multiplied speech;” our version introduces “often.” *Newcome* give the simple word, “spake;” and *Henderson* has “conversed.” If the verb in Niphal has a frequentative meaning, and not a reciprocal, our version is right, “spake often.” Then it should be so rendered in verse 13. It is to be observed that what the ungodly often spoke or said, is mentioned, but not the frequent or the mutual converse of the godly. *Jerome* imagines it to have been a defense of God’s dealings with them.

The words which follow, “Every one to his neighbor,” seem to favor the opinion that speaking “often” is the real meaning of the verb here used; for the fact of speaking “together” is conveyed in these words: and yet speaking “together” is more suitable in the thirteenth verse.—*Ed.*

Ft66 In the “book of remembrance” we have an allusion to the records kept by kings. See ^{<150602>} Ezra 6:2,3; ^{<170601>} Esther 6:1,2.—*Ed.*

Ft67 This latter meaning is the true one. The word never means what is understood by “thinking on” a thing; but to count, to reckon, and hence to contrive, to plan, to devise, and hence also to make an account of, to value, to regard. To make an account of and thus to regard and reverence, is its meaning here. The whole verse may be thus rendered,—

16. Then spake they often who feared Jehovah, Every one to his neighbor; And hearken did Jehovah and hear; And there was written a book of remembrance before him, For those who feared Jehovah, Yea, for those who regarded his name.

The last two lines describe the same persons,—they feared God and valued and regarded his name or his authority.—*Ed.*

^{Ft68} Such is the arrangement of the sentence as given in the *Septuagint*, the *Targum*, and by *Jerome*, and most interpreters. “The peculiar treasure” is connected with “they shall be to me,” and not with the verb “make,” as in our version, which is that of *Jun.* and *Trem.* The intervening clause, “In the day,” etc., may be rendered in a way different. The verb “to make” means something to appoint, to ordain, to constitute. The following version of *Newcome* is no doubt the correct one—

*They shall be unto me, saith Jehovah of hosts,
In the day which I shall appoint, a peculiar treasure.*

The “day” is again mentioned in the next chapter, verse 3, and the same words come after it, which ought to be rendered in the same way. *Henderson*’s version is materially the same.

The word rendered “jewels” in our version, is everywhere also rendered a peculiar treasure, or a special property. See ^{<021905>} Exodus 19:5; ^{<050706>} Deuteronomy 7:6. The common rendering of the *Septuagint* is either **περιποίησιν** —a purchased acquisition, as here, or **περιουσίον** —peculiar, special, as in ^{<021905>} Exodus 19:5. The latter is the word used here by *Symmachus*.—*Ed.*

^{Ft69} There is something more in the verb here used than the idea of “sparing.” When followed as here by **על**. it is commonly rendered by “having pity or compassion.” See ^{<020206>} Exodus 2:6; ^{<091503>} 1 Samuel 15:3; ^{<143617>} 2 Chronicles 36:17. It means a tender compassion or sympathy for another, such as felt towards a weak, helpless, or miserable object.—*Ed.*

CHAPTER 4

^{ft70} Both *Newcome* and *Henderson* regard this verb as used here adverbially. “And ye shall again discern, *or*, see the difference, between the righteous and the wicked.” The *Septuagint* give it as a verb “**ἔπιστραφήσεσθε**—ye shall return.” The same is done by *Jerome* and *Marckius*; and the latter gives a similar view of its import to what is given here. *Dathius* takes it meaning to be the same, “And being

better taught (or instructed—*medius edocti*) ye shall then understand how great is the difference between the godly and the ungodly, between the worshipper of God and his despiser.”—*Ed.*

Ft71 Exceedingly forcible are the words of this verse—

For behold the day! It comes burning like a furnace; And all the proud, and every worker of iniquity, shall be stubble; And burn them up shall the day that is coming, Saith Jehovah of hosts, So that not left to them shall be a root or a branch.

Very many MS., have “workers” instead of “worker;” but it is of no consequence, as the singular is often used poetically for the plural. “Root” and “branch” is no doubt a proverbial phrase, including every thing.—*Ed.*

Ft72 There is something incongruous in the expression, “the Sun of righteousness.” Hence some have considered that צדקה means here benignity or beneficence. “Righteousness,” says *Leigh*, “in a special sense, in the Hebrew and the Oriental tongues, signifieth *beneficence* or *bounty*;” and he refers to *Mede* on ^{<19B206>}Psalm 112:6. It is evidently added as descriptive of what the sun is, and used as the case often is in Hebrew, instead of an adjective. Now a righteous sun would not be proper, but a benignant or a beneficent sun would convey a suitable idea. The real meaning would then be conveyed by such a vision as the following,—

But arise for you, who fear my name, Shall a beneficent sun, With healing in its beams, And ye shall go forth and leap Like calves freed from the stall.

“Understand,” says *Marckius*, “by righteousness either benignity and beneficence, or truth, or complete constancy, or the manifold righteousness of God, which shone in him, or incontaminated uprightness and rectitude which appeared in him both as God and man, or as Mediator, which so shines, that he diffuses it to all the faithful in the gifts of justification and sanctification.”

Jerome’s exposition is, that Christ is called the Sun of righteousness, because he determines all things justly, and reveals, discovers what is good and what is evil, what is virtuous and what is vicious.

The pronoun affixed to “wings,” or beams, or rays, is feminine, which shows the gender of “sun,” שמש; but “its” is the most appropriate rendering. He or she is everything in Hebrew, and it is in so Welsh.—*Ed.*

Ft73 *Newcome*’s version of the last line is as follows—

And ye shall go forth and thrive as bullocks of the stall.

Henderson’s is—

And ye shall go forth and leap as calves of the stall.

The latter part is rendered by the *Septuagint* “Ye shall leap (or frisk—σκιρτήσετε) like calves let loose from bonds.” This conveys the idea, for פשח, means first to spread, to be diffused, and then to range at large, to leap, to frisk. The context favors this view: they would go forth, that is, from confinement to the fields, and leap like calves of the stall, or from the stall, which are tied up during the night but are let loose when the sun arises, and allowed to range at large in the field.

To apply this as a prophecy to the escape of the Christians from Jerusalem when destroyed by the Romans, has nothing in the context to justify it, but everything to the contrary. The effect here produced is ascribed to the influence of the Sun of righteousness, and it is exhilarating and joyful, and followed, as it appears from the next verse, by the subjugation of the wicked. *Calvin*’s view is consistent with the whole tenor of the passage.—*Ed.*

Ft74 See note on ^{<390317>} Malachi 3:17.—*Ed.*

Ft75 “Observe here,” says *Henry*, “the honorable mention that is made of Moses, the first writer in the Old Testament, by Malachi the last writer.”—*Ed.*

Ft76 The first word, “statutes,” חקים, means, according to *Marckius*, the moral and the ceremonial laws; and the second, “judgments,” משפטים, the civil or judicial laws. We may consider “law” at the beginning of the verse as a general term, comprehending the whole of what was delivered to Moses; and “statutes” and “judgments” as explanatory of what it was. The *Septuagint* render the first “precepts—προσταγματα.”—*Ed.*

Ft77 *Newcome*’s version is different,

That he may convert the heart of the fathers together with the

children, And the heart of the children together with their fathers.

This is inconsistent with the passage partially quoted in ^{<420117>}Luke 1:17, and also with the *Septuagint* version, which is as follows—
Who shall restore the heart of the father to the son, And the heart of a man to his neighbor.

Internal discord was a prevailing evil among the Jews. What is here promised is union and concord as the effect of the ministry of the second Elijah; but it is announced in terms suitable to a single family.—
Ed.