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COMMENTARY

**COMMENTARY
ON THE PROPHET
MICAH**

by John Calvin

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COMMENTARIES

OF JOHN CALVIN

ON THE PROPHET MICAH

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

CALVIN'S PREFACE TO MICAH

Among the Minor Prophets, Micah comes next, who is commonly called Micaiah.^{F1} But he was the second, as they say, of this name; for the first was the Micaiah who had a contest with the wicked king Ahab; and he then exercised his Prophetic office. But the second was in the same age with Isaiah, perhaps a little later: at least Isaiah had been performing his office some years before Micah had been called. It appears then that he was added to Isaiah, that he might confirm his doctrine; for that holy man had to do with ungodly men, with men of a hardened neck, yea, and so wicked, that they were wholly irreclaimable. That their doctrine therefore might be more entitled to credit, it pleased God that Isaiah and Micah should deliver their message at the same time, as it were, with one mouth, and avow their consent, that all the disobedient might be proved guilty.

But I will now come to his words: for the contents of this Book suggest what is useful for our instruction.^{F2}

LECTURE EIGHTY-FIRST

CHAPTER 1

<330101> MICAH 1:1

1. The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

1. Sermo Jehovae qui factus est (*vel*, *directus*) ad Michah Morasthitem, diebus Jotham, Achaz, Jehizkiaie, regum Judae, quem vidit super Samariam et Jerusalem.

This inscription, in the first place, shows the time in which Micah lived, and during which God employed his labors. And this deserves to be noticed: for at this day his sermons would be useless, or at least frigid, except his time were known to us, and we be thereby enabled to compare what is alike and what is different in the men of his age, and in those of our own: for when we understand that Micah condemned this or that vice, as we may also learn from the other Prophets and from sacred history, we are able to apply more easily to ourselves what he then said, inasmuch as we can view our own life as it were in a mirror. This is the reason why the Prophets are wont to mention the time in which they executed their office.

But how long Micah followed the course of his vocation we cannot with certainty determine. It is, however, probable that he discharged his office as a Prophet for thirty years: it may be that he exceeded forty years; for he names here three kings, the first of whom, that is Jotham, reigned sixteen years; and he was followed by Ahab, who also reigned as many years. If then Micah was called at the beginning of the first reign, he must have prophesied for thirty-two years, the time of the two kings. Then the reign of Hezekiah followed, which continued to the twenty-ninth year: and it may be, that the Prophet served God to the death, or even beyond the death, of Hezekiah.^{F3} We hence see that the number of his years cannot with certainty be known; though it be sufficiently evident that he taught

not for a few years, but that he so discharged his office, that for thirty years he was not wearied, but constantly persevered in executing the command of God.

I have said that he was contemporary with Isaiah: but as Isaiah began his office under Uzziah, we conclude that he was older. Why then was Micah joined to him? That the Lord might thus break down the stubbornness of the people. It was indeed enough that one man was sent by God to bear witness to the truth; but it pleased God that a testimony should be borne by the mouth of two, and that holy Isaiah should be assisted by this friend and, as it were, his colleague. And we shall hereafter find that they adopted the very same words; but there was no emulation between them, so that one accused the other of theft, when he repeated what had been said. Nothing was more gratifying to each of them than to receive a testimony from his colleague; and what was committed to them by God they declared not only in the same sense and meaning, but also in the same words, and, as it were, with one mouth.

Of the expression, that the *word was sent to him*, we have elsewhere reminded you, that it ought not to be understood of private teaching, as when the word of God is addressed to individuals; but the word was given to Micah, that he might be God's ambassador to us. It means then that he came furnished with commands, as one sustaining the person of God himself; for he brought nothing of his own, but what the Lord commanded him to proclaim. But as I have elsewhere enlarged on this subject, I now only touch on it briefly.

This vision, he says, was given him against two cities *Samaria* and *Jerusalem*.^{F4} It is certain that the Prophet was specifically sent to the Jews; and Maresah, from which he arose, as it appears from the inscription, was in the tribe of Judah: for Morasthite was an appellative, derived from the place Maresah.^{F5} But it may be asked, why does he say that visions had been given him against Samaria? We have said elsewhere, that though Hosea was specifically and in a peculiar manner destined for the kingdom of Israel, he yet by the way mingled sometimes those things which referred to the tribe or kingdom of Judah: and such was also the case with our Prophet; he had a regard chiefly to his own kindred, for he knew that he was appointed for them; but, at the same time, he overlooked not wholly the other part of the people; for the kingdom of Israel was not so

divided from the tribe of Judah that no connection remained: for God was unwilling that his covenant should be abolished by their defection from the kingdom of David. We hence see, that though Micah spent chiefly his labors in behalf of the Jews, he yet did not overlook or entirely neglect the Israelites.

But the title must be restricted to one part of the book; for threatenings only form the discourse here. But we shall find that promises, full of joy, are also introduced. The inscription then does not include all the contents of the book; but as his purpose was to begin with threatenings, and to terrify the Jews by setting before them the punishment that was at hand, this inscription was designedly given. There is, at the same time, no doubt but that the Prophet was ill received by the Jews on this account; for they deemed it a great indignity, and by no means to be endured, to be tied up in the same bundle with the Israelites; for Samaria was an abomination to the kingdom of Judah; and yet the Prophet here makes no difference between Samaria and Jerusalem. This was then an exasperating sentence: but we see how boldly the Prophet performs the office committed to him; for he regarded not what would be agreeable to men, nor endeavored to draw them by smooth things: though his message was disliked, he yet proclaimed it, for he was so commanded, nor could he shake off the yoke of his vocation. Let us now proceed —

<330101> MICAH 1:2	
2. Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.	2. Audite populi omnes, ausculta terra et plenitudo ejus, et sit Dominus Jehova vobis (vel, inter vos, vel, contra vos, potius) in testem, et Dominus e palatio (vel, templo) sanctitatis suae.

The Prophet here rises into an elevated style, being not content with a simple and calm manner of speaking. We hence may learn, that having previously tried the disposition of the people, he knew the stubbornness of almost all classes: for except he was persuaded that the people would be rebellious and obstinate, he would certainly have used some mildness, or have at least endeavored to lead them of their own accord rather than to drive them thus violently. There is then no doubt but that the obstinacy of

the people and their wickedness were already fully known to him, even before he began to address one word to them. But this difficulty did not prevent him from obeying God's command. He found it necessary in the meantime to add vehemence to his teaching; for he saw that he addressed the deaf, yea, stupid men, who were destitute of every sense of religion, and who had hardened themselves against God, and had not only fallen away through want of thought, but had also become immersed in their sins, and were wickedly and abominably obstinate in them. Since then the Prophet saw this, he makes here a bold beginning, and addresses not only his own nation, for whom he was appointed a Teacher; but he speaks to the whole world.

For what purpose does he say, *Hear, all ye people?*^{F6} It was not certainly his object to proclaim indiscriminately to all the truth of God for the same end: but he summons here all nations as witnesses or judges, that the Jews might understand that their impiety would be made evident to all, except they repented, and that there was no reason for them to hope that they could conceal their baseness, for God would expose their hidden crimes as it were on an open stage. We hence see how emphatical are the words, when the Prophet calls on all nations and would have them to be witnesses of the judgment which God had resolved to bring on his people.

He afterwards adds, *Let also the earth give ear and its fullness.* We may take the earth, by metonymy, for its inhabitants; but as it is added, *and its fullness*, the Prophet, I doubt not, meant here to address the very earth itself, though it be without reason. He means that so dreadful would be the judgment of God, as to shake created things which are void of sense; and thus he more severely upbraids the Jews with their stupor, that they heedlessly neglected the word of God, which yet would shake all the elements by its power.

He then immediately turns his discourse to the Jews: after having erected God's tribunal and summoned all the nations, that they might form as it were a circle of a solemn company, he says, *There will be for me the Lord Jehovah against you for a witness — the Lord from the temple of his holiness.* By saying that God would be as a witness for him, he not only affirms that he was sent by God, but being as it were inflamed with zeal, he appeals here to God, and desires him to be present, that the wickedness and obstinacy of the people might not be unpunished; as though he said,

“Let God, whose minister I am, be with me, and punish your impiety; let him prove that he is the author of this doctrine, which I declare from his mouth and by his command; let him not suffer you to escape unpunished, if ye do not repent.”

We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet, when he says that God would be for him a witness; as though he had said, that there was no room here to trifle; for if the Jews thought to elude God’s judgment they greatly deceived themselves; inasmuch as when he has given a command to his servants to treat with his people, he is at the same time present as a judge, and will not suffer his word to be rejected without immediately undertaking his own cause.

Nor is this addition superfluous, *The Lord from the temple of his holiness:* for we know how thoughtlessly the Jews were wont to boast that God dwelt in the midst of them. And this presumption so blinded them that they despised all the Prophets; for they thought it unlawful that any thing should be said to their disgrace, because they were the holy people of God, his holy heritage and chosen nation. Inasmuch then as the Lord had adopted them, they falsely boasted of his favors. Since then the Prophet knew that the people insolently gloried in those privileges, with which they had been honored by God, he now declares that God would be the avenger of impiety from his temple; as though he said, Ye boast that God is bound to you, and that he has so bound up his faith to you as to render his name to you a sport: he indeed dwells in his temple; but from thence he will manifest himself as an avenger, as he sees that you are perverse in your wickedness. We hence see that the Prophet beats down that foolish arrogance, by which the Jews were inflated; yea, he turns back on their own heads what they were wont boastingly to bring forward. After having made this introduction, to awaken slumbering men with as much vehemence as he could, he subjoins —

<330101> MICAH 1:3-4

3. For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.

3. Quia ecce Jehova egreditur e loco suo, et descendet, et calcabit super excelsa terrae:

4. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place.

4. Et liquefient montes sub eo, et solventur (vel, dehiscent) valles; sicut cera a conspectu ignis, sicut aquae in locum inferiorem actae.

The Prophet pursues the same subject; and he dwells especially on this — that God would be a witness against his people from his sanctuary. He therefore confirms this, when he says that *God would come from his place*. Some interpreters do at the same time take this view — that the temple would hereafter be deprived of God's presence, and would hence become profane, according to what Ezekiel declares. For as the Jews imagined that God was connected with them as long as the temple stood, and this false imagination proved to them an allurements, as it were, to sin, as on this account they took to themselves greater liberty, — this was the reason why the Prophet Ezekiel declares that God was no longer in the temple; and the Lord had shown to him by a vision that he had left his temple, so that he would no longer dwell there. Some, as I have said, give a similar explanation of this passage; but this sense does not seem to suit the context. I therefore take another view of this sentence — that God would go forth from his place. But yet it is doubted what place the Prophet refers to: for many take it to be heaven, and this seems probable, for immediately after he adds, *Descend shall God, and he will tread on the high places of the earth*. This descent seems indeed to point out a higher place: but as the temple, we know, was situated on a high and elevated spot, on mount Zion, there is nothing inconsistent in saying that God descended from his temple to chastise the whole of Judea as it deserved. Then the going forth of God is by no means ambiguous in its meaning, for he means that God would at length go forth, as it were, in a visible form. With regard then to the place, I am inclined to refer it to the temple; and this clause, I have no doubt, has proceeded from the last verse.

But why is going forth here ascribed to God? Because the Jews had abused the forbearance of God in worshipping him with vain ceremonies in the

temple; and at the same time they thought that they had escaped from his hand. As long then as God spared them, they thought that he was, as it were, bound to them, because he dwelt among them. Besides, as the legal and shadowy worship prevailed among them, they imagined that God rested in their temple. But now the Prophet says, “He will go forth: ye have wished hitherto to confine God to the tabernacle, and ye have attempted to pacify him with your frivolous puerilities: but ye shall know that his hand and his power extend much farther: he shall therefore come and show what that majesty is which has been hitherto a derision to you.” For when hypocrites set to sale their ceremonies to God, do they not openly trifle with him, as though he were a child? and do they not thus rob him of his power and authority? Such was the senselessness of that people. The Prophet therefore does not say without reason that God would go forth, that he might prove to the Jews that they were deluded by their own vain imaginations, when they thus took away from God what necessarily belonged to him, and confined him to a corner in Judea and fixed him there, as though he rested and dwelt there like a dead idol.

The particle, *Behold*, is emphatical: for the Prophet intended here to shake off from the Jews their torpidity, inasmuch as nothing was more difficult to them than to be persuaded and to believe that punishment was nigh at hand, when they flattered themselves that God was propitious to them. Hence that they might no longer cherish this willfulness, he says, *Behold, come shall the Lord, forth shall he go from his place*. Isaiah has a passage like this in an address to the people, ^{<232601>} Isaiah 26; but the object of it is different; for Isaiah intended to threaten the enemies of the Church and heathen nations: but here Micah denounces war on the chosen people, and shows that God thus dwelt in his temple, that the Jews might perceive that his hand was opposed to them, as they had so shamefully despised him, and, by their false imaginations reduced, as it were, to nothing his power.

He shall tread, he says, on the high places of the earth. By the high places of the earth I do not understand superstitious places, but those well fortified. We know that fortresses were then fixed, for the most part, on elevated situations. The Prophet then intimates, that there would be no place into which God’s vengeance would not penetrate, however well fortified it might be: “No enclosures,” he says, “shall hinder God from penetrating into the inmost parts of your fortresses; he shall tread on the

high places of the earth.” At the same time, I doubt not but that he alludes, by this kind of metaphor, to the chief men, who thought themselves exempted from the common lot of mankind; for they excelled so much in power, riches, and authority, that they would not be classed with the common people. The Prophet then intimates, that those, who were become proud through a notion of their own superiority would not be exempt from punishment.

And he afterwards adds, that this going forth of God would be terrible, *Melt*, he says, *shall the mountains under him*. It hence appears, that the Prophet did not speak in the last verse of the departure of God, as though he was going to forsake his own temple, but that he, on the contrary, described his going forth from the temple, that he might ascend his tribunal and execute punishment on the whole people, and thus, in reality, prove that he would be a judge, because he had been very daringly despised. Hence he says, *Melt shall the mountains under him, the valleys shall be rent, or cleave, as wax before the fire, as waters rolling into a lower place.*

^{F7} The Prophets do not often describe God in a manner so awful; but this representation is to be referred to the circumstance of this passage, for he sets forth God here as the judge of the people: it was therefore necessary that he should be exhibited as furnished and armed with powers that he might stake such vengeance on the Jews as they deserved. And other similar passages we shall hereafter meet with, and like to those which we found in Hosea. God then is said to melt the mountains, and he is said to strike the valleys with such terror that they cleave under him; in short, he is said so to terrify all elements, that the very mountains, however stony they may be, melt like wax or like waters which flow, — because he could not otherwise produce a real impression on a people so obstinate, and who, as it has been said, so flattered themselves even in their vices.

We may further easily learn what application to make of this truth in our day. We find the Papists boasting of the title Church, and, in a manner, with vain confidence, binding God to themselves, because they have baptism, though they have adulterated it with their superstitions; and then, they think that they have Christ, because they still retain the name of a Church. Had the Lord promised that his dwelling would be at Rome, we yet see how foolish and frivolous would be such boasting: for though the temple was at Jerusalem, yet the Lord went forth thence to punish the sins of the people, yea, even of the chosen people. We further know, that it is

folly to bind God now to one place, for it is his will that his name should be celebrated without any difference through the whole world.

Wheresoever, then, the voice of the Gospel sounds, God would have us to know that he is present there. What the Papists then proudly boast of — that Christ is joined to them — will turn out to their own condemnation; — why so? Because the Lord will prove that he is the avenger of so impious and shameful a profanation, as they not only presumptuously lay claim to his name, but also tear it in pieces, and contaminate it with their sacrilegious abominations.

Again, since God is said to melt the mountains with his presence, let us hence learn to rouse up all our feelings whenever God comes forth not that we may flee to a distance from him, but that we may reverently receive his word, so that he may afterwards appear to us a kind and reconciled Father. For when we become humble, and the pride and height of our flesh is subdued, he then immediately receives us, as it were, into his gentle bosom, and gives us an easy access to him, yea, he invites us to himself with all possible kindness. That the Lord then may thus kindly receive us, let us learn to fear as soon as he utters his voice: but let not this fear make us to flee away but only humble us, so that we may render true obedience to the word of the Lord. It follows —

<330101> **MICAH 1:5**

5. For the transgression of Jacob *is* all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What *is* the transgression of Jacob? *is it* not Samaria? and what *are* the high places of Judah? *are they* not Jerusalem?

5. Propter scelus^{F8} Jacob totum hoc, et propter transgressiones domus Israel: quod scelus Jacob? Annon Samaria? Et quae excelsa Jehudah? Annon Jerusalem?

The Prophet teaches, in this verse, that God is not angry for nothing; though when he appears rigid, men expostulate with him, and clamor as though he were cruel. That men may, therefore, acknowledge that God is a just judge, and that he never exceeds moderation in punishments, the Prophet here distinctly states that there was a just cause, why God denounced so dreadful a judgment on his chosen people, — even because

not only a part of the people, but the whole body had, through their impiety, fallen away; for by the house of Jacob, and by the house of Israel, he means that impiety had everywhere prevailed, so that no part was untainted. The meaning then is, — that the contagion of sin had spread through all Israel, that no portion of the country was free from iniquity, that no corner of the land could bring an excuse for its defection; the Lord therefore shows that he would be the judge of them all, and would spare neither small nor great.

We now then understand the Prophet's object in this verse: As he had before taught how dreadful would be God's vengeance against all the ungodly, so now he mentions their crimes, that they might not complain that they were unjustly treated, or that God employed too much severity. The Prophet then testifies that the punishment, then near at hand, would be just.

He now adds, *What is the wickedness of Jacob?* The Prophet, no doubt, indirectly reproves here the hypocrisy which ruled dominant among the people. For he asks not for his own satisfaction or in his own person; but, on the contrary, he relates, by way of imitation, (*μιμητικῶς*, — *imitatively*) what he knew to be ever on their lips, "Oh! what sort of thing is this sin? Why! thou assumest here a false principle, — that we are wicked men, ungodly and perfidious: thou does us a grievous wrong." Inasmuch, then, as hypocrites thought themselves pure, having wiped, as it were, their mouths, whenever they eluded reproofs by their sophistries, the Prophet borrows a question, as it were, from their own lips, "Of what kind is this wickedness? Of what sort is that transgression?" As though he said, "I know what ye are wont to do, when any one of the Prophets severely reproves you; ye instantly contend with him, and are ready with your objections: but what do you gain? If you wish to know what your wickedness is, it is Samaria; and where your high places are, they are at Jerusalem." It is the same as if he had said, "I do not here contend with the common people, but I attack the first men: my contest then is with the princes themselves, who surpass others in dignity, and are, therefore, unwilling to be touched."

But it sometimes happens that the common people become degenerated, while some integrity remains among the higher orders: but the Prophet shows that the diseases among the people belonged to the principal men;

and hence he names the two chief cities, Jerusalem and Samaria, as he had said before, in the first verse, that he proclaimed predictions against these: and yet it is certain, that the punishment was to be in common to the whole people. But as they thought that Jerusalem and Samaria would be safe, though the whole country were destroyed, the Prophet threatens them by name: for, relying first on their strength, they thought themselves unassailable; and then, the eyes of nearly all, we know, were dazzled with empty splendor, powers and dignity: thus the ungodly wholly forget that they are men, and what they owe to God, when elevated in the world. So great an arrogance could not be subdued, except by sharp and severe words, such as the Prophet, as we see, here employs. He then says, that the *wickedness of Israel* was *Samaria*; the fountain of all iniquities was the royal city, which yet ought to have ruled the whole land with wisdom and justice: but what any more remains, when kings and their counselors tread under foot all regard for what is just and right, and having cast away every shame, rise up in rebellion against God and men? When therefore kings thus fall from their dignity, an awful ruin must follow.

This is the reason why the Prophet says that the wickedness of Israel was Samaria, that thence arose all iniquities. But we must at the same time bear in mind, that the Prophet speaks not here of gross crimes; but, on the contrary, he directs his reproof against ungodly and perverted forms of worship; and this appears more evident from the second clause, in which he mentions transgressions in connection with the high places. We hence see, that all sins in general are not here reproved, but their vicious modes of worship, by which religion had been polluted among the Jews as well as the Israelites. But it might seem very unjust, that the Prophet should charge with sin those forms of worship in which the Jews laboriously exercised themselves with the object of pacifying God. But we see how God regards as nothing whatever men blend with his worship out of their own heads. And this is our principal contest at this day with the Papists; we call their perverted and spurious modes of worship abominations: they think that what is heavenly is to be blended with what is earthly. We diligently labor, they say, for this end — that God may be worshipped. True; but, at the same time, ye profane his worship by your inventions; and it is therefore an abomination. We now then see how foolish and frivolous are those delusions, when men follow their own wisdom in the duty of worshipping God: for the Prophet here, in the name of God,

fulminates, as it were, from heaven against all superstitions, and shows that no sin is more detestable, than that preposterous caprice with which idolaters are inflamed, when they observe such forms of worship as they have themselves invented.

Now with regard to the *high places*, we must notice, that there was a great difference between the Jews and the Israelites at that time as to idolatry. The Israelites had so fallen, that they were altogether degenerated; nothing could be seen among them that had an affinity to the true and legitimate worship of God: but the Jews had retained some form of religion, they had not thus abandoned themselves; but yet they had a mixture of superstitions; such as one would find, were he to compare the gross Popery of this day with that middle course which those men invent, who seem to themselves to be very wise, fearing, forsooth, as they do, the offenses of the world; and hence they form for us a mixture, I know not what, from the superstitions of the Papacy and from the Reformation, as they call it. Something like this was the mixture at Jerusalem. We however see, that the Prophet pronounces the same sentence against the Jews and the Israelites and that is, that God will allow nothing that proceeds from the inventions of men to be joined to his word. Since then God allows no such mixtures, the Prophet here says that there was no less sin on the high places of Judea, than there was in those filthy abominations which were then dominant among the people of Israel. But the remainder we must defer until to-morrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that, since to a perverse, and in every way a rebellious people, thou didst formerly show so much grace, as to exhort them continually to repentance, and to stretch forth thy hand to them by thy Prophets, — O grant, that the same word may sound in our ears; and when we do not immediately profit by thy teaching, O cast us not away, but, by thy Spirit, so subdue all our thoughts and affections, that we, being humbled, may give glory to thy majesty, such as is due to thee, and that, being allured by thy paternal favor, we may submit ourselves to thee, and, at the same time, embrace that mercy which thou offerest and presentest to us in Christ, that we may not doubt but thou wilt be a Father to us, until

we shall at length enjoy that eternal inheritance, which has been obtained for us by the, blood of thine only-begotten Son. Amen.

LECTURE EIGHTY-SECOND

<330101> MICAH 1:6

6. Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof.

6. Et ponam Samariam (hoc est, ideo; enim hic sumitur pro illativa particula; ponam igitur Samariam) in acervum agri, in plantationes vinae; et devolvam in vallem lapides ejus, et fundamenta ejus retegam.

Though Micah intended especially to devote his services to the Jews, as we have said yesterday, he yet, in the first place, passes judgment on Samaria; for it was his purpose afterwards to speak more fully against Jerusalem and the whole of Judea. And this state of the case ought to be borne in mind; for the Prophet does not begin with the Israelites, because he directs his discourse peculiarly to them; but his purpose was briefly to reprove them, and then to address more especially his own people, for it was for this purpose that he was called. Now, as he threatens destruction to Samaria and the whole kingdom of Israel on account of their corrupted forms of worship, we may hence learn how displeasing to God is superstition, and that he regards nothing so much as the true worship of his name. There is no reason here for men to advance this position — that they do not designedly sin; for God shows how he is to be worshipped by us. Whenever, then, we deviate in any thing from the rule which he has prescribed, we manifest, in that particular, our rebellion and obstinacy. Hence the superstitious ever act like fools with regard to God, for they will not submit to his word, so as to be thereby alone made wise.

And he says, *I will set Samaria as an heap of the field*, that is, such shall be the ruins that they shall differ nothing from the heaps of the fields: for husband men, we know, when they find stones in their fields, throw them into some corner, that they may not be in the way of the slough. Like such heaps then, as are seen in the fields, Samaria would be, according to what God declared. He then says, that the place would be empty, so that *vines* would be *planted* there; and, in the third place, that its *stones* would be

scattered through the valley; as when one casts stones where there is a wide plain, they run and roll far and wide; so would be the scattering of Samaria according to what the Prophet says, it was to be like the rolling of stones in a wide field. He adds, in the fourth place, *I will uncover her foundations*, that is, I will entirely demolish it, so that a stone, as Christ says, may not remain on a stone, (<402402> Matthew 24:2.) We now perceive the import of the words; and we also perceive that the reason why the Prophet denounces on Samaria so severe a judgment was, because it had corrupted the legitimate worship of God with its own inventions; for it had devised, as we well know, many idols, so that the whole authority of the law had been abolished among the Israelites. It now follows —

<330101> MICAH 1:7

7. And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered *it* of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot.

7. Et omnia sculptilia^{F9} ejus diruentur, et omnes mercedes ejus exurentur igne (*alii transferunt, donaria,*) et omnia idola ejus ponam in vastitatem; quia e mercede meretricis congregavit, et ad mercedem meretricis revertentur.

The Prophet goes on with the same subject, and says, that the ruin of Samaria was at hand, so that its idols would be broken, and also, that its wealth would be destroyed which she had gathered by illegitimate means, and which she thought to be the reward of her idolatry. But God mentions idols here expressly by his Prophet, in order to confirm what we noticed yesterday — that the cause of vengeance was, because Samaria had abandoned itself to ungodly forms of worship, and had departed from the Law. That the Israelites might then understand the cause for which God would so severely punish them, the Prophet here makes express mention of their graven images and idols. God is not indeed angry with stones and wood; but he observes the abuse and the perversion of them, when men pollute themselves by wickedly worshipping such things. This is the

reason why God says here that the graven images of Samaria would be broken in pieces, and that its idols would be destroyed.

With regard to the *wages*, the Prophet no doubt designed to stamp with disgrace all the wealth of Samaria. אַתָּנֶן, *atanen*, is properly a gift or a present. But as he twice repeats it, and says, that what Samaria possessed was the *reward of an harlot*, and then, that it would *return to the reward of an harlot*, he, in the first place, I have no doubt, upbraids the Israelites, because they, after the manner of harlots and strumpets, had heaped together their great riches: and this was done by Jeroboam, who constructed a new form of worship, in order to secure his own kingdom. The Israelites then began to flourish; and we also know how wealthy that kingdom became, and how proud they were on account of their riches. As, then, the Israelites despised the kingdom of Judah, and thought themselves in every way happy, and as they ascribed all this, as we have seen in Hosea, to their superstitions, Micah speaks here according to their view of things, when he says, Idolatry has been gainful to you, this splendor dazzles your eyes; but your rewards I have already doomed to the burning: they shall then be burnt, and thus perish. Hosea also, as we have seen, made use of the same comparison, — that the children of Israel felicitated themselves in their impiety, like a harlot, who, while she gains many presents from those who admire her beauty, seems not conscious of her turpitude and baseness: such were the Israelites. The Prophets therefore does not say, without reason, *Behold, your rewards, by burning, shall perish*, or, be consumed with fire. Why so? Because ye have gathered them, he says, from the reward of an harlot, and all this shall return to the reward of an harlot.

This last clause ought to be restricted to the gifts or wealth of Samaria; for it cannot properly be applied to idols or graven images. The import of the whole then is that God would be the avenger of idolatry with regard to the city of Samaria and the whole kingdom of Israel. Besides, as the Israelites boasted that their ungodly forms of worship turned out to their happiness and prosperity, God declares that the whole of this success would be evanescent, like that of the harlot, who amasses great wealth, which soon vanishes away: and we see that thus it commonly happens.

Some explain the passage thus, — that the gifts, with which the Israelites adorned their temples, would return to be the reward of an harlot, that is,

would he transferred to Chaldea, and that the Babylonians would, in their turn, adorn with them their idols. But this view is not suitable to the place; for the Prophet does not say that what Samaria had gathered would be a prey or a spoil to enemies but that it would perish by fire. ^{F10} He speaks therefore, proverbially when he says that the produce, from the reward of an harlot, would return to be the reward of an harlot, that is, that it would become nothing; for the Lord sets a curse on such riches as strumpets gain by their baseness, while they prostitute themselves. Since, then, the whole of such wealth is under the curse of God, it must necessarily soon pass away like smoke: and this, in my view, is the real meaning of the Prophet. It now follows —

<330101> MICAH 1:8-9	
8. Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls.	8. Super hoc plangam et ululabo; incedam spoliatus et nudus; faciam planctum tanquam draconum, et luctum tanquam filiarum struthionis:
9. For her wound is incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem.	9. Quia acerbæ sunt plagæ ejus (est mutatio numeri;) quia venit usque ad Jehudam; accessit ad portam populi mei, ad Jerusalem.

The Prophet here assumes the character of a mourner, that he might more deeply impress the Israelites; for we have seen that they were almost insensible in their torpidity. It was therefore necessary that they should be brought to view the scene itself, that, seeing their destruction before their eyes they might be touched both with grief and fear. Lamentations of this kind are everywhere to be met with in the Prophets, and they ought to be carefully noticed; for we hence gather how great was the torpor of men, inasmuch as it was necessary to awaken them, by this form of speech, in order to convince them that they had to do with God: they would have otherwise continued to flatter themselves with delusions. Though indeed the Prophet here addresses the Israelites, we ought yet to apply this to ourselves; for we are not much unlike the ancient people: for however God may terrify us with dreadful threatening, we still remain quiet in our filth.

It is therefore needful that we should be severely treated, for we are almost void of feeling.

But the Prophets sometimes assumed mourning, and sometimes they were touched with real grief: for when they spoke of aliens and also of the enemies of the Church, they introduce these lamentations. When a mention is made of Babylon or of Egypt, they sometimes say, *Behold, I will mourn, and my bowels shall be as a timbrel*. The Prophets did not then really grieve; but, as I have said, they transferred to themselves the sorrows of others, and ever with this object, that they might persuade men that God's threatenings were not vain, and that God did not trifle with men when he declared that he was angry with them. But when the discourse was respecting the Church and the faithful, then the Prophets did not put on grief. The representation here is then to be taken in such a way as that we may understand that the Prophet was in real mourning, when he saw that a dreadful ruin was impending over the whole kingdom of Israel. For though they had perfidiously departed from the Law, they were yet a part of the holy race, they were the children of Abraham, whom God had received into favor. The Prophet, therefore, could not refrain from mourning unfeignedly for them. And the Prophet does here these two things, — he shows the fraternal love which he entertained for the children of Israel, as they were his kindred, and a part of the chosen people, — and he also discharges his own duty; for this lamentation was, as it were, the mirror in which he sets before them the vengeance of God towards men so extremely torpid. He therefore exhibits to them this representation, that they might perceive that God was by no means trifling with men, when he thus denounced punishment on the wicked and such as were apostates.

Moreover, he speaks not of a common lamentation, but says, *I will wail and howl*, and then, *I will go spoiled*. The word **אֲנֹשָׁה**, *shulal*, some take as meaning one out of his mind or insane, as though he said, "I shall be now as one not possessed of a sound mind." But as this metaphor is rather unnatural, I prefer the sense of being spoiled; for it was the custom with mourners, as it is well known, to tear and to throw away their garments from them. *I will then go spoiled and naked*; and also, I will make wailing, not like that of men, but like the wailing of dragons: I will mourn, he says, as the ostriches are wont to do. In short, the Prophet by these forms of speech intimates, that the coming evil would by no means be of an

ordinary kind: for if he adopted the usual manner of men, he could not have set forth the dreadfulness of God's vengeance that was impending.

He afterwards subjoins, that the wounds vault be grievous; but he speaks as of what was present, *Grievous*, he says, *are the wounds*. Grievous means properly full of grief; others render it desperate or incurable, but it is a meaning which suits not this place; for אַנּוּשָׁה, *anushe*, means what we express in French by douloureuse. *The wounds*, then, *are full of grief: for it came*, (something is understood; it may suitably be referred to the enemy, or, what is more approved, to the slaughter) — It came then, that is, the slaughter, ^{F11} *to Judah; it has reached to the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem itself*. He says first, to Judah, speaking of the land; and then he confines it to the cities; for when the gates are closed up against enemies, they are forced to stop. But the Prophet says, that the cities would be no hindrance to the enemies to approach the very gates and even the chief city of Judah, that is, Jerusalem; and this, we know, was fulfilled. It is the same then as though he said that the whole kingdom of Israel would be so laid waste, that their enemies would not be content with victory, but would proceed farther and besiege the holy city: and this Sennacherib did. For after having subverted the kingdom of Israel, as though it was not enough to draw the ten tribes into exile, he resolved to take possession of the kingdom of Judah; and Jerusalem, as Isaiah says, was left as a tent. We hence see that the threatening of the Prophet Micah were not in vain. It now follows —

<330101> MICAH 1:10

10. Declare ye *it* not at Gath,
weep ye not at all: in the house of
Aphrah roll thyself in the dust.

10. In Gath ne annuntietis,
flendo ne fleatis; ^{F12} propter
domum Aphrah pulvere te
involve (*vel*, *voluta* te in
pulvere.)

The Prophet seems here to be inconsistent with himself: for he first describes the calamity that was to be evident to all; but now he commands silence, lest the report should reach the enemies. But there is here nothing contradictory; for the evil itself could not be hid, since the whole kingdom of Israel would be desolated, the cities demolished or burnt, the whole

country spoiled and laid waste, and then the enemies would enter the borders of Judah: and when Jerusalem should have been nearly taken how could it have been concealed? No, this could not have been. There is no wonder then that the Prophet had referred here to a solemn mourning. But he now speaks of the feeling of those who were desirous of hiding their own disgrace, especially from their enemies and aliens: for it is an indignity which greatly vexes us, when enemies taunt us, and upbraid us in our misfortunes; when no hope remains, we at least wish to perish in secret, so that no reproach and disgrace should accompany our death; for dishonor is often harder to be borne, and wounds us more grievously, than any other evil. The Prophet then means that the Israelites would not only be miserable, but would also be subject to the reproaches and taunts of their enemies. We indeed know that the Philistine were inveterate in their hatred to the people of God; and we know that they ever took occasion to upbraid them with their evils and calamities.

This then is the meaning of the Prophet, when he says, *In Gath declare it not, by weeping weep not*; as though he said, “Though extreme evils shall come upon you, yet seek to perish in silence; for you will find that your enemies will gape for the opportunity to cut you with their taunts, when they shall see you thus miserable. He then forbids the people’s calamities to be told in Gath; for the Philistine usually desired nothing more than the opportunity to torment the people of God with reproaches.

It now follows, *In the house of Aphrah, in dust roll thyself*. There is here an alliteration which cannot be conveyed in Latin: for עפרה, *ophre*, means dusty, and עפר, *opher*, is dust. That city attained its name from its situation, because the country where it was, was full of dust; as if a city were called Lutosa, muddy or full of clay; and indeed many think that Lutetia (Paris) had hence derived its name. And he says, *Roll thyself in dust, in the house full of dust*; as though he had said that the name would be now most suitable, for the ruin of the city would constrain all neighboring cities to be in mourning to cast themselves in the dust; So great would be the extremity of their evils.

But we must ever bear in mind the object of the Prophet: for he here rouses the Israelites as it were with the sharpest goads, who entertained no just idea of the dreadfulfulness of God’s vengeance, but were ever deaf to all threatening. The Prophet then shows that the execution of this vengeance

which he denounced was ready at hand; and he himself not only mourned, but called others also to mourning. He speaks of the whole country, as we shall see by what follows. I shall quickly run over the whole of this chapter; for there is no need of long explanation, as you will find.

<330101> MICAH 1:11

11. Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having thy shame naked: the inhabitant of Zaanan came not forth in the mourning of Bethazel; he shall receive of you his standing.

11. Transi pariter (ad verbum, transi vobis ^{F13} habitatrix Saphir, nuda probrose; non egredietur habitatrix Zaanan in luctu Beth-Aezel, sumet a vobis stationem suam (alii vertunt, substantiam; sed male, meo iudicio.)

The Prophet here addresses the cities which were on the borders of the kingdom of Israel, and through which the enemy would pass in entering the kingdom of Judah. He therefore bids the inhabitants of the city Saphir to pass over, and says, that the city would be ashamed or in a shameful manner naked. The word שפיר, *shaphir*, means splendid. He then says, “Thou art now beautiful, but the Lord will discover thy shame, so that thy nakedness shall be a shame to all, and the greatest disgrace to thyself.” There is a correspondence in the words, though not an alliteration. Hence the Prophet says, that though the city was called splendid, it would yet be deformed, so that no one would deign to look on it, at least without feeling shame. There is the same correspondence in the word Zaanan; for צעה, *tsoe*, means to transfer, as צען, *tson*, is to migrate. Hence the Prophet says, *Go forth shall not the inhabitant of Zaanan for the mourning of Beth-Aezel*; that is, he will remain quiet at home: this he will do contrary to what will be natural; for whence is the name of the city? even from removing, for it was a place of much traffic. But he will remain, he says, at home: though he may see his neighbors dragged into exile, he will not dare to move from his place.

He now adds, *Take will the enemy from you his station*. The verb עמד, *omad*, means to stand; nor is there a doubt but that when the Prophet says, He will take from you his standing, he speaks of the standing or station of the enemy: but interpreters however vary here. Some understand, that when the enemy had continued long in the land, they

would not depart before they possessed the supreme power; as though he said, “Ye will think that your enemy can be wearied out with delay and tediousness, when not able soon to conquer your cities: this, he says, will not be the case; for he will resolutely persevere, and his expectation will not disappoint him; for he will receive the reward of his station, that is, of his delay.” But some say, He will receive his station from you. They explain the verb לָקַח, *lakech*, metaphorically, as meaning to receive instruction from hand to hand; as though the Prophet had said, Some, that is, your neighbors, will learn their own position from you. What does this mean? Zaanan will not go forth on account of the mourning of its neighboring city Aezel: others will afterwards follow this example. How so? For Zaanan will be, as it were, the teacher to other cities; as it will not dare to show any sign of grief for its neighbors, being not able to succor them; so also, when it shall be taken in its turn into exile, that is, its citizens and inhabitants, its neighbors will remain quiet, as though the condition of the miserable city was no object of their care. They shall then learn from you their standing; that is, Ye will remain quiet and still, when your neighbors will be destroyed; the same thing will afterwards happen to you. But as this bears but little on the main subjects we may take either of these views. ^{F14} It afterwards follows —

<330101> MICAH 1:12	
<p>12. For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem.</p>	<p>12. Quia doluit propter bonum (<i>alii</i>, expectavit ad bonum; <i>alii</i>, infirmata est) habitatrix Maroth; quia descendit malum a Jehova ad portam Jerusalem.</p>

The Prophet joins here another city even Maroth, and others also in the following verses. But in this verse he says, that Maroth would be in sorrow for a lost good. The verb חוּל, *chul*, means to grieve; and it has this sense here; for the Marothites, that is, the inhabitants of that city, would have to grieve for losing their property and their former happy condition. But as the verb means also to expect, some approve of a different exposition, that is, — that the inhabitants of the city Maroth would in

vain depend on an empty and fallacious expectation, for they were doomed to utter destruction. In vain then will the inhabitant of Maroth expect or entertain hope; for *an evil descends from Jehovah to the gate of the city*. This view is very suitable, that is, that its hope will disappoint Maroth, since even the city of Jerusalem shall not be exempted. For though God had then by a miracle delivered the chief city, and its siege was raised through the intervention of an angel, when a dreadful slaughter, as sacred history records, took place; yet the city Maroth was not then able to escape vengeance. We now see the reason why this circumstance was added. Some give a harsher explanation, — that the citizens of Maroth were to be debilitated, or, as it were, demented. As this metaphor is too strained, I embrace the other, — that the citizens of Maroth *would grieve for the loss of good*,^{F15} or that they would vainly expect or hope, since they were already doomed to utter ruin, without any hope of deliverance.

But we must notice, that *evil was nigh at hand from Jehovah*, for he reminds them, that though the whole country would be desolated by the Assyrians, yet God would be the chief leader, since he would employ the work of all those who would afflict the people of Israel. That the Jews then, as well as the Israelites might know, that they had to do, not with men only, but also with God, the celestial Judge, the Prophet distinctly expresses that all this would proceed from Jehovah. He afterwards adds —

<330101> MICAH 1:13	
<p>13. O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the swift beast: she is the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion: for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee.</p>	<p>13. Alliga currum ad camelum (vel, dromedarium; alii vertunt, equos celeres) habitatrix Lachis: principium sceleris ipsa est filiae Zion; quia in te inventae sunt transgressiones Israel.</p>

By bidding the citizens of Lachish to tie their chariots to dromedaries he intimates that it would not be not safe for them to remain in their city, and that nothing would be better for them than to flee elsewhere and to carry away their substance. “Think,” he says, “of flight, and of the quickest flight.” The word רכש, *recash*, which I render dromedary or camel, is of an uncertain meaning among the Hebrews; some render it swift horses: but

we understand the Prophet's meaning; for he intimates that there would be no time for flight, except they made great haste, for the enemies would come upon them quickly.

And he then subjoins that that city had been the beginning of sin to the Jews; for though he names here the daughter of Zion, he still includes, by taking a part for it the whole, all the Jews. And why he says that Lachish had been the beginning of sin to the citizens of Jerusalem, we may collect from the next clauses, *In thee*, he says, *were found the transgressions of Israel*. The citizens of Lachish were then, no doubt, the first who had embraced the corruptions of Jeroboam, and had thus departed from the pure worship of God. When, therefore, contagion had entered that city, it crept, by degrees, into neighboring places, until at length, as we find, the whole kingdom of Judah had become corrupt: and this is what the Prophet repeats more fully in other places. It was not then without reason that he denounces desolation here on the citizens of Lachish; for they had been the authors of sin to their own kindred. However alienated the ten tribes had become from pure faith and pure worship, the kingdom of Judah remained still upright, until Lachish opened the door to ungodly superstitions; and then its superstitions spread through the whole of Judea. She therefore suffered the punishment which she deserved, when she was drawn away into distant exile, or, at least, when she could not otherwise escape from danger, than by fleeing into some fear country, and that very swiftly. *She is the beginning*, he says, *of sin to the daughter of Zion*. How so? For in thee — (it is more emphatical when the Prophet turns his discourse to Lachish itself) — *in thee*, he says, *were found the transgressions of Israel*. It follows —

<330101> MICAH 1:14

14. Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moreshethgath: the houses of Achzib *shall be* a lie to the kings of Israel.

14. Propterea mittes dona super Moresheth (*vel*, propter Moresheth-) Gath, filiis Achzib in mendacium regibus Israel.

Here the Prophet alludes to another thing, — that they would attempt to pacify their enemies with gifts, and would try to redeem themselves and their neighbors. But the Prophet expressly mentions this, that the event

might teach them that nothing happens without a design; for it ought to work a greater conviction in blind and obstinate men, when they see that they really find that to be true which had been long before predicted. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet enumerates here various particulars; it was, that the hand of God might be more evident and conspicuous when he would begin, in an especial manner, to fulfill all the things which he now in words foretells, *Thou*, he says, *wilt send a gift for Moreseth-gath*; that is, for a neighboring city. And he calls it Moreseth-gath, to distinguish it from another city of the same name. *Thou wilt then send gifts for Moreseth-gath, to the sons of Achzib for a lie.* אַחְזִיב, *aczib*, is a word derived from one which means a lie. There is, therefore, a striking alliteration, when he says, Thou wilt send gifts to the sons of אַחְזִיב, *Aczib*, for a lie, לַאֲחִזְבִּי, *laaczeb*; that is Thou wilt send gifts to the sons of a lie, for a lie. The city had obtained its name from its fallacies or guiles. And he says, *for a lie to the kings of Israel*; because it profited the children of Israel nothing to pacify them with gifts or to attempt to draw them to their side, as they hired the services of one another. So then he says, that they would be for a lie to the kings of Israel, for they would gain nothing by having many auxiliaries. Some take the words actively, — that the kings of Israel had first deceived the citizens of Achzib: but this view is less probable; I am therefore disposed to adopt the other, — that though the citizens of Lachish tried to conciliate their neighbors with a great sum of money, especially the people of Achzib, this would be yet to no purpose; for it would be a lie to the people of Israel: or, it may be, that the Prophet's meaning is this, — that the citizens of Achzib had already wished to bring aid, but in vain to the kings of Israel; for Lachish was one of the first cities which the Assyrians conquered; but it was within the kingdom of Judah, or on its borders. It is then probable that the kings of Israel had recourse to the aid of this people, and were not assisted. Now, as the citizens of Lachish also endeavored to extricate themselves from the hand of their enemies by such aid, the prophet derides such a folly, inasmuch as they did not become wise by experience, having seen with their own eyes, that such an help had been useless and deceptive to the kings of Israel: they ought then to have tried some other means rather than to expose themselves to the same deceptions. ^{F16} I cannot finish the chapter to-day.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that, being warned by so many examples, the record of which thou hast designed to continue to the end of the world, that we may learn how dreadful a judge thou art to the perverse, — O grant, that we may not, at this day, be deaf to thy teaching, which is conveyed to us by the mouth of thy Prophet, but that we may strive to be so reconciled to thee, that, passing by all men, we may present ourselves unreservedly to thee, so that, relying on thy mercy alone which thou hast promised to us in Christ, we may not doubt but thou wilt be propitious to us, and be so touched with the spirit of true penitence, that, if we have been to others a bad example and an offense, we may lead others to the right way of salvation, and each of us may so endeavor to assist our neighbors in a holy life, that we may together attain that blessed and celestial life, which thine only-begotten Son has procured for us by his own blood. Amen.

LECTURE EIGHTY-THIRD

<330101> MICAH 1:15

15. Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah: he shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel.

15. Adhuc possessorem mittam, ^{F17} tibi habitatrix Maresah; usque ad Adullam veniet gloria Israel.

The Prophet here threatens his own birth place, as he had done other cities; for, as we have stated, he sprung from this city. He does not now spare his own kindred: for as God is no respecter of persons, so also God's servants ought, as with closed eyes, to deal impartially with all, so as not to be turned here and there either by favor or by hatred, but to follow without any change, whatever the Lord commands them. We see that Micah was endued with this spirit, for he reprov'd his own kindred, as he had hitherto reprov'd others.

There is a peculiar meaning in the word, Mareshah, for it is derived from **רש**, *irish*, and it means possession. The Prophet now says, *I will send to thee* **הורש**, *euresh*, a possessor; the word is from the same root. But he means that the Morasthites would come into the power of their enemies no less than their neighbors, of whom he had spoken before. He says, *to Adullam*. This was also a city in the tribe of Judah, as it is well known. But some would have "enemy" to be here understood and they put **כבוד**, *cabud*, in the genitive case: The enemy of the glory of Israel shall come to Adullam; but this is strained. Others understand the passage thus that the glory of Israel would come to disgrace; for Adullam, we know, was a cave. Since then it an obscure place, the Prophet here, as they think, declares that the whole glory of Israel would be covered with dishonor, because the dignity and wealth, in which they gloried would lose their pristine fixate, so that they would differ nothing from an ignoble cave. If any approve of this meaning, I will not oppose them. Yet others think that the Prophet speaks ironically and that the Assyrian is thus called because the whole glory and dignity of Israel would by him be taken away. But there is no need of confining this to enemies; we may then take a simpler view, and

yet regard the expression as ironical, — that the glory, that is, the disgrace or the devastation of Israel, would come to Adullam. But what if we read it, in apposition, He shall come to Adullam, the glory of Israel? For Adullam was not obscure, as those interpreters imagine, whom I have mentioned, but it is named among the most celebrated cities after the return and restoration of the people. When, therefore, the whole country was laid waste, this city, with a few others, remained, as we read in the

<161101> Nehemiah 11. It might then be, that the Prophet called Adullam the glory of Israel; for it was situated in a safe place, and the inhabitants thought that they were fortified by a strong defense, and thus were not open to the violence of enemies. This meaning also may be probable; but still, as the glory of Israel may be taken ironically for calamity or reproach if any one approves more of this interpretation, it may be followed. I am, however, inclined to another, — that the Prophet say, that the enemy would come to Adullam, which was the glory of Israel, ^{F18} because that city was as it were in the recesses of Judea, so that an access to it by enemies was difficult. It may be also that some may think, that the recollection of its ancient history is here revived; for David concealed himself in its cave, and had it as his fortress. The place no doubt had, from that time, attained some fame; then this celebrity, as I have said, may be alluded to, when Adullam is said to be the glory of Israel. It follows —

<330101> **MICAH 1:16**

16. Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee.

16. Decalvare et tondeas te super filiis delitiarum tuarum; dilata calvitium sicut aquila, quoniam migrarunt abs te.

The Prophet at length concludes that nothing remained for the people but lamentation; for the Lord had resolved to desolate and destroy the whole country. Now they were wont in mourning, as we have seen in other places, to shave and even tear off their hair: and some think that the verb קרחי, *korechi*, implies as much as though the Prophet said “Pluck, tear, pull off your hair.” When afterwards he adds רגזי, *regizi*, they refer it to shavings which is done by a razor. However this may be, the Prophet here

means that the condition of the people would be so calamitous that nothing would be seen anywhere but mourning.

Make bald, he says, *for the children of thy delicacies.* ^{F19} The Prophet here indirectly upbraids those perverse men, who after so many warnings had not repented, with the neglect of God's forbearance: for whence did those delicacies proceed, except from the extreme kindness of God in long sparing the Israelites, notwithstanding their disobedience? The Prophet then shows here that they had very long abused the patience of God, while they each immersed themselves in their delicacies. Now, he says, *Enlarge thy baldness as the eagle.* Eagles are wont to cast off their feathers; and hence he compares here bald men to eagles, as though he called them, Hairless. As then the eagles are for a certain time without feathers until they recover them; so also you shall be hairless, even on account of your mourning. He says, *For they have migrated from thee.* He intimates that the Israelites would become exiles, that the land might remain desolate. Now follows —

CHAPTER 2

<330201> MICAH 2:1

1. Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand.


1. Vae cogitantibus iniquitatem et fabricantibus malitiam super cubilibus suis! Quum illuxerit mane, exequentur eam, quia est ad potentiam manus ipsorum.

The Prophet does not here speak only against the Israelites, as some think, who have incorrectly confined this part of his teaching to the ten tribes; but he, on the contrary, (in discharging his office, addresses also the Jews. He refers not here to idolatry, as in the last chapter; but inveighs against sins condemned in the second table. As then the Jews had not only polluted the worship of God, but also gave loose reins to many iniquities, so that they dealt wrongfully with their neighbors, and there was among them no attention to justice and equity, so the prophet inveighs here as we shall see, against avarice, robberies, and cruelty: and his discourse is full of vehemence; for there was no doubt such licentiousness then prevailing among the people, that there was need of severe and sharp reproofs. It is at the same time easy to perceive that his discourse is mainly directed against the chief men, who exercised authority, and turned it to wrong purposes.

Woe, he says, *to those who meditate on iniquity, and devise^{F20} evil on their beds, that, when the morning shines, they may execute it.* Here the Prophet describes to the life the character and manners of those who were given to gain, and were intent only on raising themselves. He says, that in their beds they were meditating on iniquity, and devising wickedness. Doubtless the time of night has been given to men entirely for rest; but they ought also to use this kindness of God for the purpose of restraining themselves from what is wicked: for he who refreshes his strength by nightly rest, ought to think within himself, that it is an unbecoming thing and even monstrous, that he should in the meantime devise frauds, and guiles, and iniquities. For why does the Lord intend that we should rest, except that all evil things should rest also? Hence the Prophet shows here, by

implication, that those who are intent on devising frauds, while they ought to rest, subvert as it were the course of nature; for they have no regard for that rest, which has been granted to men for this end, — that they may not trouble and annoy one another.

He afterwards shows how great was their desire to do mischief, *When it shines in the morning, he says, they execute it.* He might have said only, They do in the daytime what they contrive in the night: but he says, *In the morning*; as though he had said, that they were so heated by avarice, that they rested not a moment; as soon as it shone, they were immediately ready to perpetrate the frauds they had thought of in the night. We now then apprehend the import of the Prophet's meaning.

He now subjoins, *For according to their power is their hand.* As  *al*, means God, an old interpreter has given this rendering, Against God is their hand: but this does not suit the passage. Others have explained it thus, For strength is in their hand: and almost all those well-skilled in Hebrew agree in this explanation. Those who had power, they think, are here pointed out by the Prophet, — that as they had strength, they dared to do whatever they pleased. But the Hebrew phrase is not translated by them; and I greatly wonder that they have mistaken in a thing so clear: for it is not, There is power in their hand; but their hand is to power. The same mode of speaking is found in ^{<200301>} Proverbs 3, and there also many interpreters are wrong; for Solomon there forbids us to withhold from our neighbor his right, When thine hand, he says, is for power; some say, When there is power to help the miserable. But Solomon means no such thing; for he on the contrary means this, When thine hand is ready to execute any evil, abstain. So also the Lord says in ^{<052801>} Deuteronomy 28,

“When the enemy shall take away thy spoils,
thy hand will not be for power;”

that is, “Thou wilt not dare to move a finger to restrain thy enemies; when they will plunder thee and rob thee of thy substance, thou wilt stand in dread, for thy hand will be as though it were dead.” I come now to the present passage, Their hand is for power: ^{F21} the Prophet means, that they dared to try what they could, and that therefore their hand was always ready; whenever there was hope of lucre or gains the hand was

immediately prepared. How so? Because they were restrained neither by the fear of God nor by any regard for justice; but their hand was for power, that is, what they could, they dared to do. We now then see what the Prophet means as far as I can judge. He afterwards adds —

<330202> **MICAH 2:2**

2. And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.

2. Et concupiverunt agros et rapiunt; et domos, et auferunt; et vexant virum et domum ejus, virum et haereditatem ejus.

Micah confirms here what is contained in the former verse; for he sets forth the alacrity with which the avaricious were led to commit plunder; nay, how unbridled was their cupidity to do evil. As soon as they have coveted any thing, he says, they take it by force. And hence we gather, that the Prophet, in the last verse, connected wicked counsels with the attempt of effecting them; as though he had said, that they indeed carefully contrived their frauds, but that as they were skillful in their contrivances, so they were not less bold and daring in executing them.

The same thing he now repeats in other words for a further confirmation, *As soon as they have coveted fields, they seize them by force; as soon as they have coveted houses they take them away*; they oppress a man and his house together;^{F22} that is, nothing escaped them: for as their wickedness in frauds was great, so their disposition to attempt whatever they wished was furious. And well would it be were there no such cruel avarice at this day; but it exists every where, so that we may see, as in a mirror, an example of what is here said. But it behoves us carefully to consider how greatly displeasing to God are frauds and plunders, so that each of us may keep himself from doing any wrong, and be so ruled by a desire of what is right, that every one of us may act in good faith towards his neighbors, seek nothing that is unjust, and bridle his own desires: and whenever Satan attempts to allure us, let what is here taught be to us as a bridle to restrain us. It follows —

3. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is evil.

3. Propterea sic dicit Jehova, Ecce ego cogitans super familiam hanc malum, quod non submovebitis ab illo (sic est ab verbum; a quo submovebitis) colla vestra, et non ambulabitis in altitudine; quia tempus malum hoc.

The Prophet shows now that the avaricious were in vain elevated by their frauds and rapacity, because their hope would be disappointed; for God in heaven was waiting his time to appear against them. Though they had anxiously heaped together much wealth, yet God would justly dissipate it altogether. This is what he now declares.

Behold, he says, *thus saith Jehovah, I am meditating evil against this family.*^{F23} There is here a striking contrast between God and the Jews, between their wicked intentions and the intentions of God, which in themselves were not evil, and yet would bring evil on them. God, he says, thus speaks, Behold, I am purposing; as though he said, “While ye are thus busying yourselves on your beds, while ye are revolving many designs while ye are contriving many artifices, ye think me to be asleep, ye think that I am all the while meditating nothing; nay, I have my thoughts too, and those different from yours; for while ye are awake to devise wickedness I am awake to contrive judgment.” We now then perceive the import of these words: it is God that declares that he meditates evil, and it is not the Prophet that speaks to these avaricious and rapacious men; and the evil is that of punishment, inasmuch as it is the peculiar office of God to repay to all what they deserve, and to render to each the measure of evil they have brought on others.

Ye shall not, he says, remove your necks from under it. Since hypocrites always promise to themselves impunity, and lay hold on subterfuges, whenever God threatens them, the Prophet here affirms, that though they sought every escape, they would yet be held bound by God’s hand, so that they could not by any means shake off the burden designed for them. And this was a reward most fully deserved by those who had withdrawn their necks when God called them to obedience. They then who refuse to

obey God, when he requires from them a voluntary service, will at length be drawn by force, not to undergo the yoke, but the burden which will altogether overwhelm them. Whosoever then will not willingly submit to God's yoke, must at length undergo the great and dreadful burden prepared for the unnamable.

Ye will not then be able to withdraw your necks, and *ye shall not walk in your height*. He expresses still more clearly what I have referred to, — that they were so elated with pride, that they despised all threatening and all instruction: and this presumption became the cause of perverseness; for were it not that a notion of security deceived men, they would presently bend, when God threatens them. This then is the reason why the Prophet joins this sentence, *ye shall no more walk in your height*; that is, your haughtiness shall then surely be made to succumb; *for it will be a time of evil*. He means, as I have said, that those who retain a stir and unbending neck towards God, when he would lay on them his yoke, shall at length be made by force to yield, however rebellious they may be. How so? For they shall be broken down, inasmuch as they will not be corrected. The Prophet then adds —

<330204> **MICAH 2:4**

4. In that day shall one take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, and say, We be utterly spoiled: he hath changed the portion of my people: how hath he removed it from me! turning away he hath divided our fields.

4. In die illo tollent super eos parabolam, et lugebunt (sunt quidem verba singularis numeri, **שׂא** et **נָהַה**); caeterum indefinita est locutio; nam qui subau diunt conductios homines, quibus solebat injungi haec provincia, ut lugubres cantus conciperent ad cladem aliquam, nescio an assecuti sint mentem Prophetae: tamen hoc relinquo in medio, quia alibi vidimus fuisse tunc cantores in luctu, quemadmodum etiam alibi erunt Praeficae, hoc est, mulieres lamentatrices; caeterum malo indefinite accipere; Tollent igitur super vos parabolam et lugebunt) luctu lamentabili (vel, lamento lamenti,) dicendo, Vastando vastati sumus; partem populi mei mutavit; quomodo tollent a nobis ad restituendum? Agros nostros dividet.

The verse is in broken sentences; and hence interpreters vary. But the meaning of the Prophet appears to me to be simply this, *In that day they shall take up a proverb against you*; that is, it will not be an ordinary calamity, but the report concerning it will go forth every where so that the Jews will become to all a common proverb. This is one thing. As to the word מִשָּׁל, *meshil*, it is taken, we know, for a weighty saying, and in the plural, weighty sayings, called by the Latins, sentences (*sententias*) or sayings, (*dicta*), and by the Greeks, apophthegmata. ἀποφθεγματα. But these sayings were thus called weighty by the Hebrews, because he who elevated his style, made use especially of figurative expressions, to render his discourse nobler and more splendid. Hence many render this word, enigmas. It accords well with the Prophet's meaning, to suppose, that proverbial sayings would spread every where respecting the Jews, especially as calamities were usually described in a plaintive song. They shall *then* mourn over you with lamentable mourning. But this ought to be referred to the fact, — that the calamity would be every where known. It yet seems that this sentence is applied afterwards to the Jews themselves, and not unsuitably. But it is an indefinite mode of speaking, since the Prophet speaks not of one or two men, but of the whole people.

They shall then mourn in this manner, *Wasted, we have been wasted: the portion of my people has he changed* — (it is the future instead of the past) — *He has then changed the portion of my people*. This may be applied to God as well as to the Assyrians; for God was the principal author of this calamity; he it was who changed the portion of the people: for as by his blessing he had long cherished that people, so afterwards he changed their lot. But as the Assyrians were the ministers of God's vengeance, the expression cannot be unsuitably applied to them. The Assyrian then has taken away *the portion of my people*. And then he says, *How has he made to depart*, or has taken away, or removed *from me*, (literally, to me,) *to restore*, — though שִׁבֵב, *shibeb*, may be from the root שׁוּב, *shub*, it yet means the same, — *How then has he taken away from us to restore our fields he divides*, that is, which he has divided; for the relative אֲשֶׁר, *asher*, is understood and there is also a change of time. Now as the discourse, as I have said, is in broken sentences, there are various interpretations. I however think that the Prophet simply means this — *How as to restoring has he taken away our fields, which he hath divided?* that is, How far off are we from restitution? for every hope is far removed,

since the Lord himself has divided among strangers our land and possession; or since the enemies have divided it among themselves; for it is usual after victory, for every one to seize on his own portion. Whether then this be understood of the Assyrians, or rather be referred to God, the meaning of the Prophet seems clearly to be this, — that the Jews were not only expelled from their country but that every hope of return was also taken away, since the enemies had parted among themselves their inheritance, so that they who had been driven out, now in vain thought of a restitution. ^{F24} But I read this in the present time; for the Prophet introduces here the Jews as uttering this lamentation, — “It is now all over with us, and there is no remedy for this evil; for not only are we stripped of all our property and ejected from our country, but what has been taken away by our enemies cannot be restored to us, inasmuch as they have already parted our possessions among themselves, and every one occupies his own portion and his own place, as though it were his own inheritance. We have therefore to do, not only with the Assyrians in general, but also with every individual; for what every one now occupies and possesses he will defend, as his rightful and hereditary possession.”

Some conjecture from this verse, that the discourse belongs rather to the Israelites, who were banished without any hope of return; but no necessity constrains us to explain this of the Israelites; for the Prophet does not declare here what God would do, but what would be the calamity when considered in itself. We have indeed said already in many places, that the Prophets, while threatening, speak only of calamities, desolations, deaths, and destructions, but that they afterwards add promises for consolation. But their teaching is discriminative: when the Prophets intend to terrify hypocrites and perverse men, they set forth the wrath of God only, and leave no hope; but when they would inspire with hope those who are by this means humbled, they draw forth comfort to them even from the goodness of God. What is here said then may fitly and really be applied to the Jews. It follows —

<330205> MICAH 2:5

5. Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the LORD.

5. Itaque non erit tibi projiciens funiculum ad sortem in coetu Jehovae.

Here the Prophet concludes his discourse respecting God's design to cleanse Judea from its perverse and wicked inhabitants, that it might no longer be the inheritance of one people. For the land, we know, had been given to the posterity of Abraham, on the condition, that it was to be held by them as an heritage: and we also know, that a line was determined by lot whenever the year of Jubilee returned, that every one might regain his own possession. The Prophet now testifies that this advantage would be taken away from the Jews, and that they would hereafter possess the land by no hereditary right; for God, who had given it, would now take it away.

There shall not then be one to cast a line by lot in the assembly of Jehovah. And he seems here to touch the Jews, by calling them the assembly of Jehovah. He indeed adopted them, they were the people of God: but he intimates that they were repudiated, because they had rendered themselves unworthy of his favor. He therefore, by calling them ironically *the assembly of Jehovah*, denies that they rightly retained this name, inasmuch as they had deprived themselves of this honor and dignity. It now follows

<330206> MICAH 2:6	
<p>6. Prophecy ye not, <i>say they to them that prophesy</i>: they shall not prophesy to them, <i>that they shall not take shame.</i></p>	<p>6. Ne stilletis; stillabunt; non stillabunt illis (<i>hoc est, super eos;</i>) non apprehendet ignominias (<i>sic est ad verbum.</i>)</p>

Here the conciseness of the expressions has made interpreters to differ in their views. Some read thus, *Distill ye not, — they will distill*; that is, the Jews speak against the prophets, and with threats forbid them, as with authority, to address them. The Hebrew word, distill, means the same as to speak; though at the same time it is applied more commonly to weighty addresses than to such as are common and ordinary. If any understands, *they will distill*, or speak, of the Jews, then the Prophet points out their arrogance in daring to contend with God's prophets, and in trying to silence and force them to submission. We indeed find that ungodly men act

thus, when they wish to take away the liberty of teaching from God's prophets; for they resist as though they themselves were doubly and treble prophets. So also in this place, *Distill ye not*, that is, the Jews say, Let not the servants of God prophesy. But some think that a relative is understood, *Distill ye not* for them who distill; as though he had said, that ungodly men would not bear God's prophets and thus would prevent and restrain them, as much as they could, from speaking. Others make this distinction, *Distill ye not*, — *they shall distill*; as though the Jews said the first, and God the second. Distill ye not, — this was the voice of the ungodly and rebellious people, who would cast away from them and reject every instruction: but God on the other side opposed them and said, *Nay, they shall distill*; ye forbid, but it is not in your power; I have sent them: though ye may rage and glamour a hundred times, it is my will that they should proceed in their course.

We hence see how various are the explanations: and even in the other part of the verse there is no more agreement between interpreters: *They shall not distill*; respecting this clause, it is sufficiently evident, that God here intimates that there would be now an end to all prophecies. How so? Because he would not render his servants a sport, and subject them to reproach. This is the true meaning: and yet some take another view, as though the Prophet continued his sentence, *They shall not distill*, lest the people should receive reproaches; for the ungodly think, that if they close the mouths of the prophets, all things would be lawful to them, and that their crimes would be hid, in short, that their vices would not be called to an account; as though their wickedness was not in itself sufficiently reproachful, were God to send no prophets, and no reproof given. No doubt, profane men are so stupid as to think themselves free from every reproach, when God is silent, and when they put away from themselves every instruction. Hence some think, that this passage is to be understood in this sense. But I consider the meaning to be that which I have stated; for he had before said, *Distill ye not who distill*; that is, Ye prophets, be no longer troublesome to us; why do you stem our ears? We can no longer bear your boldness; be then silent. Thus he expressly introduced the Jews as speaking with authority, as though it was in their power to restrain the prophets from doing their duty. Now follows, as I think, the answer of God, *They shall not distill*, that he may not get reproaches: Since I see that my doctrine is intolerable to you, since I find a loathing so great and so

shameful, I will take away my prophets from you: I will therefore rest, and be hereafter silent. — Why? “Because I effect nothing; nay, I subject my prophets to reproaches; for they lose their labor in speaking, they pour forth words which produce no fruit; for ye are altogether irreclaimable. Nay, as they are reproachfully treated by you, their condition is worse than if they were covered with all the disgrace of having been criminal. Since then I subject my prophets to reproach I will not allow them to be thus mocked by you. They shall therefore give over, they shall prophesy no longer. ^{F25,}”

But the Lord could not have threatened the Jews with any thing worse or more dreadful than with this immunity, — that they should no more hear anything which might disturb them: for it is an extreme curse, when God gives us loose reins, and suffers us, with unbridled liberty, to rush as it were headlong into evils, as though he had delivered us up to Satan to be his slaves. Since it is so, let us be assured that it is an awful threatening, when he says, *They shall not distill*, lest they should hereafter become objects of reproach.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou art pleased to try our patience by requiring mutual justice and the offices of love and benevolence, — O grant, that we may not be wolves one to another, but show ourselves to be really thy children, by observing all those duties of justice and kindness which thou commandest, and thus follow what is right and just through the whole course of our life, that we may at length enjoy that blessedness which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE EIGHTY-FOURTH

<330207> MICAH 2:7

7. O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the LORD straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?

7. Qui diceris domus Jacob, an reductus est in angustias Spiritus Jehovae? (alii vertunt, an imminutus est Spiritus Jehovae; קצר significat coarctare, significat etiam imminuere apud Hebraeos; sed melius quadrat sensus ille quem reddidi.) An haec sunt opera ejus? Annon verba mea bona sunt cum eo (hoc est, apud eum) qui rectus ambulat?

The Prophet now reproveth the Israelites with greater severity, because they attempted to impose a law on God and on his prophets and would not endure the free course of instruction. He told us in the last verse, that the Israelites were inflated with so much presumption, that they wished to make terms with God: "Let him not prophesy" they said, as though it were in the power of man to rule God: and the Prophet now repeats, *Is the Spirit of Jehovah straitened?* as though he said, Ye see the intent of your presumption, and how far it proceeds; for ye wish to subject God's Spirit to yourselves and to your own pleasure. The prophets doubtless did not speak of themselves, but by the bidding and command of God. Since then the prophets were the organs of the Holy Spirit, whosoever attempted to silence them, usurped to himself an authority over God himself, and in a manner tried to make captive his Spirit: for what power can belong to the Spirit, except he be at liberty to reprove the vices of men, and condemn whatever is opposed to God's justice? When this is taken away, there is no more any jurisdiction left to the Holy Spirit. We now then see what the Prophet means in this place: he shows how mad a presumption it was in the Israelites to attempt to impose silence on the prophets, as though they had a right to rule the Spirit of God, and to force him to submission.

Is the Spirit of Jehovah straitened? And this mode of speaking ought to be noticed, for it possesses no ordinary emphasis; inasmuch as the Prophets by this reproof; recalls the attention of these perverse men to the author of

his teaching; as though he had said, that the wrong was not done to men, that war was not carried on with them, when instruction is prohibited, but that God is robbed of his own rights and that his liberty is taken away, so that he is not allowed to execute his judgment in the world by the power of his Spirit.

And farther, the Prophet here ironically reproves the Israelites, when he says, *O thou who art called the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of Jehovah reduced to straits?* For if heathens, who have never known the teaching of religion, and to whom no heavenly mysteries have been revealed, had said, that they would have nothing to do with the prophets, it would have been much more endurable; for what wonder would it be for ignorant men to repudiate all instruction? But it was monstrous for the Israelites, who gloried in the name of God, to dare to rise up so rebelliously against the prophets: they always boasted of their own race, as though they surpassed all the rest of the world, and were a holy nation separated from all others. Hence the Prophet says, “Ye wish to be called the house of Jacob; what is your excellency and dignity, except that you have been chosen by God to be his peculiar people? If then you have been habituated to the teaching of God, what fury and madness it is, that you cannot bear his prophets, but wish to close their mouths?” We now then see the point of this irony, when the Prophet says that they were *called the house of Jacob*. He seems at the same time to intimate, in an indirect way, that they were a spurious race. As they were called by other prophets, Amorites and Sodomites: even so in this place the Prophet says, “Ye are indeed the house of Jacob, but it is only as to the name.” They were in reality so degenerated, that they falsely pretended the name of the holy patriarch; yea, they falsely and mendaciously boasted of their descent from holy men, though they were nothing else but as it were rotten members. Inasmuch then as they had so departed from the religion of Abraham and of other fathers, the Prophet says, “Thou art indeed called what thou art not.”

He afterwards adds, *Are these his works?* Here he brings the Israelites to the proof, as though he said, How comes it, that the prophets are so troublesome and grievous to you, except that they sharply reprove you, and denounce on you the judgment of God? But God is in a manner forced, except he was to change his nature, to treat you thus sharply and severely. Ye boast that you are his people, but how do you live? *Are these his*

works? that is, do you lead a life, and form your conduct according to the law laid down by him? But as your life does not in any degree correspond with what God requires, it is no wonder that the prophets handle you so roughly. For God remains the same, ever like himself; but ye are perfidious, and have wholly repudiated the covenant he has made with you. Then this asperity, of which ye are wont to complain, ought not to be deemed unjust to you.

He then subjoins, *Are not my words good to him who walks uprightly?* Here the Prophet more distinctly shows, why he had before asked, Whether their works were those of the Lord; for he compares their life with the doctrine, which on account of its severity displeased them; they said that the words of the prophets were too rigid. God here answers, that his words were gentle and kind, and therefore pleasant, that is, to the pious and good; and that hence the fault was in them, when he treated them less kindly than they wished. The import of the whole then is, that the word of God, as it brings life and salvation to man, is in its own nature gracious, and cannot be either bitter, or hard, or grievous to the pious and the good, for God unfolds in it the riches of his goodness.

We hence see that God here repudiates the impious calumny that was cast on his word; as though he had said, that the complaints which prevailed among the people were false; for they transferred the blame of their own wickedness to the word of God. They said that God was too severe: but God here declares that he was gentle and kind, and that the character of his word was the same, provided men were tractable, and did not, through their perverseness, extort from him anything else than what he of himself wished. And the same thing David means in ^{<191801>} Psalm 18, when he says that God is perverse with the perverse: for in that passage he intimates, that he had experienced the greatest goodness from God, inasmuch as he had rendered himself docile and obedient to him. On the contrary, he says, God is perverse with the perverse; that is, when he sees men obstinately resisting and hardening their necks, he then puts on as it were a new character, and deals perversely with them, that is, severely, as their stubbornness deserves; as for a hard knot, according to a common proverb, a hard wedge is necessary. We now then perceive the meaning of this passage, that *God's words are good to those who walk uprightly*; that is they breathe the sweetest odour, and bring nothing else but true and real joy: for when can there be complete happiness, except when God

embraces us in the bosom of his love? But the testimony respecting this love is brought to us by his word. The fault then is in us, and ought to be imputed to us, if the word of God is not delightful to us.

Some expound this whole passage differently, as though the Prophet relates here what was usually at that time the boast of the Israelites. They hence think that it is a narrative in which he represents their sentiments; (*narrationem esse mimiticam;*) as though the Prophet introduced here the ungodly and the rebellious animating one another in their contempt of God's word, *O thou who art called the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of Jehovah straitened?* Hypocrites, we know, are so blind and intoxicated by a false confidence, that they hesitate not heedlessly to abuse all the favors of God. As then God had conferred a great excellency on his people, they thus emboldened one another, — “Are we not the children and posterity of Abraham? What will it avail us to be a holy and chosen race, and the peculiar people of God, and a royal priesthood, if we are to be thus unkindly treated? We find that these prophets shamefully reprove us: where is our dignity, except we show that we have more privileges than other nations?” These interpreters therefore think the meaning to be this, — that they make a show of their own privileges, that they might with more liberty reject every instruction, and shake off every yoke. And when it is said, *Is the Spirit of God diminished?* these interpreters regard this as meaning, that they were satisfied with the solemn promise of God, and that as they were a holy race, they now superciliously despised all the prophets, — “Is the Spirit of God dead, who was formerly the interpreter of the everlasting covenant, which God made with us? Has he not testified that we should be to him a holy and elect people? Why then do ye now attempt to reduce to nothing this sacred declaration of the Holy Spirit, which is inviolable?” It is then added, *Are these his works?* “Ye talk of nothing but of threats and destruction; ye denounce on us numberless calamities: but God is beneficent and kind in his nature, patient and merciful; and ye represent him to us as a tyrant; but this view is wholly inconsistent with the nature of God.” And, in the last place, God subjoins, as these interpreters think, an exception, — “All these are indeed true, if faithfulness exists among you, and the authority of my word continues; *for my words are good*, but not to all without any difference: be upright and sincere, and ye shall find me dealing kindly, gently, tenderly, and

pleasantly with you: then my rigor will cease, which now through my word so much offends and exasperates you.”

This meaning may in some measure be admitted; but as it is hard to be understood, we ought to retain the former, it being more easy and flowing. There is nothing strained in the view, that the Prophet derides the foolish arrogance of the people, who thought that they were sheltered by this privilege, that they were the holy seed of Abraham. The Prophet answers that this titular superiority did not deprive God of his right, and prevent him to exercise his power by the Spirit. “*O thou then who art called the house of Jacob*; but only as far as the title goes: the Spirit of God is not reduced to straits. But if thou boastest thyself to be the peculiar people of God, are these thy works the works of God? Does thy life correspond with what he requires? There is no wonder then that God chastises you so severely by his word, for there is not in you the spirit of docility, which allows the exercise of his kindness.”^{F26}

But though the Prophet here upbraids the ancient people with ingratitude, yet this truth is especially useful to us, which God declares, when he says that his word is good and sweet to all the godly. Let us then learn to become submissive to God, and then he will convey to us by his word nothing but sweetness, nothing but delights; we shall then find nothing more desirable than to be fed by this spiritual food; and it will ever be a real joy to us, whenever the Lord will open his mouth to teach us. But when at any time the word of the Lord goads and wounds, and thus exasperates us, let us know that it is through our own fault. It follows —

<330208> **MICAH 2:8**

8. Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war.

8. Et qui antehac populus meus, quasi in hostem surrexit ex adverso; vestem decoris (alii vertunt, pallium et tunicam; sed nulla est copula, et אָתְּמִיל significat decorem, ideo possumus vertere vestem decoris) praedati estis a transeuntibus cum fiducia, perinde ac si reverterentur a praelio.

As the words of the Prophet are concise, they contain some obscurity. Hence interpreters differ. First, as to the word אָתְּמִיל, *atmul*, some think

it to be one word, others divide it into **את**, *at* and **מול**, *mul*, which means, over against, opposite; and they regard it of the same import with **ממול**, which immediately follows. But as the repetition would be frigid, the Prophet no doubt intended that it should be taken here in its proper sense, and its meaning is yesterday. But this time is not strictly taken by the Hebrews, for they take yesterday as meaning the past time, even when many years have elapsed. I have therefore rendered it *formerly*, which suits this place. There is also another difference as to the sense of the text, for some think that this **אתמול**, *atmul*, is to be joined to the verb **קומם**, *kumum*; but it is rather to be connected with the word **עמי**, *omi*, *My people formerly*. There is another diversity, that is, as to the term **אויב**, *avib*, for some apply it to God, and others to the people; that they rose up or stood one against another. For this verb is explained in two ways: some view it as a verb neuter, They stand against the enemy; and others render it, They rise up against the enemy; and this second meaning is most approved, and harmonizes best with the context.

I will now refer to what I consider to be the real meaning. The Prophet, in the first place, says, that the people were formerly under the power and government of God, but that now they were become wholly alienated from him. *Formerly*, then, *it was my people*, as though God now renounced all friendship with them. “I have hitherto owned you as my people, but hereafter I shall have nothing to do with you, for the whole authority of my word is by you entirely abolished; ye have violated your faith: in short, as you have destroyed my covenant, ye have ceased to be my people; for whatever favor I have conferred on you, you have deprived yourselves of it by your wickedness; and though I have adopted you, yet your wickedness now strips you of this privilege.” This is one thing.

It then follows, *They have risen up as against an enemy*. I consider a note of likeness to be here understood. The Prophet says simply, *Against an enemy have they risen up*; but I regard the meaning to be, that they had risen up as against an enemy; that is that they had made God, their best father, their enemy, inasmuch as they had by their crimes provoked his displeasure.^{F27} He then confirms this truth by saying, that they practiced robberies among themselves. We indeed know that hypocrites ever hide themselves under their religious rites, and spread them forth as their shield whenever they are reproved. Hence the Prophet says, that they were not

to be deemed the people of God for spending their labors on sacrifices, for they were at the same time robbers, and plundered innocent men.

The garment of comeliness, he says, or, the garment and the cloak, (about such words I do not labor much,) *they take away from those who pass by securely*; ^{F28} that is from all who are peaceable. For when there is a suspicion of war, or when a traveler does any mischief, he rightly deserves to be punished. But the Prophet says here, that they were robbed, who passed by securely as though they were in a safe country. “When travelers fear nothing, ye strip them of their garments, as though they were returning from war: as they are wont, when war is over, to seize on spoils wherever found, and no one can keep his own; so now, during peace, ye take to yourselves the same liberty, as though all things were exposed to plunder, and ye were in a hostile country, lately the scene of warfare.”

We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet. He first intimates that the people were now rejected by God, for they had rendered themselves, by their most abandoned life, wholly unworthy of his benefits; and at the same time he reproves their ingratitude that having been the people of God, they choose to make war with him rather than to observe the covenant which he had made for their safety; for it was a most shameful wickedness in them, since they had been chosen from the whole world to be a peculiar people, to prefer going to war with God rather than to live quietly under his protection. And that they did rise up against God he proves, for they gave themselves up to robberies; they plundered, even during times of peace, which circumstance greatly aggravated their wickedness. It now follows —

<330209> **MICAH 2:9**

9. The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever.

9. Mulieres populi mei expulstis e domo delectationum ipsarum, (est quidem mutatio numeri, sed hoc nihil ad rem;) a parvulis earum abstulistis decus (vel, ornamentum) meum perpetuo.

He proceeds with the same subject, that they refrained from no acts of injustice. It was indeed a proof of extreme barbarity not to spare women

and children, for they are both weak and helpless. Their sex exempts women from violence, and their age, children.^{F29} Even in wars, women, and also children, escape in safety. We hence see that the Prophet, by stating a part for the whole, proves here that the people had addicted themselves to cruelty really barbarous; they were not restrained from exercising it, no, not even on women and children. Since it was so, it follows, that their boast of being the chosen people was vain and fallacious.

House of delights he ascribes to the women who, being the weaker sex, prefer being at home and in the shade, rather than going abroad. The more necessary it was that their recesses should remain safe to them. Now, what was taken away from the children, God calls it *his ornament*; for his blessing, poured forth on children, is the mirror of his glory: he therefore condemns this plunder as a sacrilege. The word **לעולם**, *laoulam*, designates the continuance of their crimes, as though he had said, that they were cruel without ever showing any repentance. Now it follows —

<330210> MICAH 2:10	
<p>10. Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.</p>	<p>10. Surgite, abite, quia non est haec requies; quoniam polluta est; dissipavit dissipatione violenta (interponitur copula, et dissipatione; ideo poterimus commode vertere, dissipavit et quidem dissipatione violenta, (vel, roborata; id enim significat verbum נמרץ.)</p>

Here again the Prophet checks the foolish confidence of the people. The land of Canaan, we know, had been honored by God with the distinction of being a rest; yea God called it, not only the rest of the people, but also his own rest,

‘I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest,’
 (<199501> Psalm 95:12.)

The land of Canaan then was a sort of rest, hidden under the wings of God; for the Lord had assigned it as an inheritance to his chosen people. As God then dwelt in that land, and had also given it to the children of Abraham, that they might rest there in safety, and as this was also one of the

blessings contained in the Law, hypocrites said, pursuing their usual course of falsely and groundlessly claiming to themselves the favors of God, that they could not be thence expelled, and that those Prophets were falsifiers who dared to change any thing in God's covenant. This is the reason why the Prophet now says,

Arise, depart; this is not your rest. “False confidence,” he says, “deceives you, as ye think that ye are inseparably fixed in your habitation. God indeed has made such a promise, but this condition was added, — If ye will stand faithful to his covenant. Now ye are become covenant-breakers: ye think that he is fast bound to you; all the cords are loosened; for as ye have perfidiously departed from the Law of God, there is now no reason for you to think that he is under any obligation to you. There is then no ground for you to boast of being a holy people; you have indeed the name, but the reality has ceased to be: therefore *arise and depart*: but to sit still securely and proudly will avail you nothing, for God will now drive you afar off: and I now declare to you that you must arise and depart, for ye cannot rest in this land against the will of God: and God will now thrust you out of it.” We now perceive the real meaning of the Prophet.

He afterwards adds, *For it is polluted; he will scatter you with violent scattering.*^{F30} Here again he vindicates God from their calumny and ungodly murmurings. We indeed know how difficult it was to bring down that people, who were steeped in so great a perverseness. And we find that the Prophet had a hard contest with the hypocrites, for the multitude had ever this language in their mouths, — What! is it of no moment that God has favored us with so many and so remarkable promises? Is our adoption nothing but a mockery? Has he in vain given us this land by an hereditary right? Since then hypocrites thus brought forward their privileges in opposition to God, and yet abused them, it was necessary to convince them to the contrary, and this is what the Prophet does here, — “Ye call,” he says, “this land your rest, but how do you rest in it? God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath, for he dwells among you to sanctify you: but ye live disorderly, and carry on war with God himself: have not your pollutions obliterated that holy rest, which has been enjoined on you by God? Ye then see that this change has happened through your fault, that is, that God has ceased to call this land, as he was wont formerly to do, your and his own rest. *It is not then your rest*; he will therefore *scatter you with violent or strong scattering*: Ye in vain promise

to yourselves rest in this land, since ye carry on war with God, and cease not to provoke his wrath against you.” It follows —

<330211> **MICAH 2:11**

11. If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

11. Si vir ambulans in spiritu et fallaciter mantiens, stillem tibi pro vino et pro sicera, tunc erit stillans populi hujus (hoc est, hic demum erit Propheta populi hujus: sicut etiam priore membro proprie vertendum est, si prophetem.)

The Prophet points out here another vice by which the people were infected — that they wished to be soothed with flatteries: for all the ungodly think that they are in a manner exempt from God’s judgment, when they hear no reproof; yea they think themselves happy, when they get flatterers, who are indulgent to their vices. This is now the disease which the Prophet discovers as prevailing among the people. Jerome sought out a meaning quite different here, as in the former verses; but I will not stop to refute him, for it is enough to give the real meaning of the Prophet. But as before he rendered women, princes, and thus perverted entirely the meaning, so he says here, I would I were a vain Prophet, that is, walking in vanity, and mendacious; as though Micah said “I wish I were false in denouncing on you the calamities of which I speak; for I would rather announce to you something joyful and favorable: but I cannot do this, for the Lord commands what is different.” But there is nothing of this kind in the words of the Prophet. Let us then return to the text.

If a man walks in the spirit, and deceitfully lies, ^{F31} etc. Almost all interpreters agree in this, — that to walk in the spirit, is to announce any thing proudly and presumptuously; and they take spirit for wind or for deceits. But I doubt not, but that to walk in the spirit was then a common mode of speaking, to set forth the exercise of the prophetic office. When therefore any one was a Prophet, or one who discharged that office, or sustained the character of a teacher, he professed himself to have been sent from above. The Prophets were indeed formerly called the men of the

spirit, and for this reason, because they adduced nothing from themselves or from their own heads; but only delivered faithfully, as from hand to hand, what they had received from God. To walk in the spirit then means, in my view, the same thing as to profess the office of a teacher. When therefore any one professed the office of a teacher, what was he to do? “If I,” says Micah, “being endued with the Spirit, and called to teach, wished to ingratiate myself with you, and preached that there would be an abundant increase of wine and strong drink, all would applaud me; for if any one promises these things, he becomes *the prophet of this people.*”

In short, Micah intimates that the Israelites rejected all sound doctrine, for they sought nothing but flatteries, and wished to be cherished in their vices; yea, they desired to be deceived by false adulation to their own ruin. It hence appears that they were not the people they wished to be deemed, that is, the people of God: for the first condition in God’s covenant was, — that he should rule among his people. Inasmuch then as these men would not endure to be governed by Divine power, and wished to have full and unbridled liberty, it was the same as though they had banished God far from them. Hence, by this proof, the Prophet shows that they had wholly departed from God, and had no intercourse with him. If there be then any man walking in the spirit, let him, he says, keep far from the truth; for he will not otherwise be borne by this people. — How so? Because they will not have honest and faithful teachers. What is then to be done? Let flatterers come, and promise them plenty of wine and strong drink, and they will be their best teachers, and be received with great applause: in short, the suitable teachers of that people were the ungodly; the people could no longer bear the true Prophets; their desire was to have flatterers who were indulgent to all their corruptions.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that since we cannot otherwise really profit by thy word, than by having all our thoughts and affections subjected to thee, and offered to thee as a sacrifice, — O grant, that we may suffer thee, by the sound of thy word, so to pierce through everything within us, that being dead in ourselves, we may live to thee, and never suffer flatteries to become our ruin but that we may, on the contrary, patiently endure reproofs, however bitter they may be, only let them serve to us as medicine, by which our inward

vices may be cleansed, until at length being thoroughly cleansed and formed into new creatures, we may, by a pious and holy life, really glorify thy name, and be received into that celestial glory, which has been purchased for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

LECTURE EIGHTY-FIFTH

<330212> MICAH 2:12-13

12. I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.

12. Congregans congregabo te totum Jacob; colligens colligam residuum Israel; simul ponam eum tanquam oves Bosra, tanquam gregem in medio ovilis sui; tumultuabuntur prae hominibus (id est, propter hominum multitudinem.)

13. The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them.

13. Ascendet effractor coram ipsis; frangent et transibunt portam, et egredientur per ipsam; et transibit rex ipsorum coram ipsis; et Jehova in capite ipsorum.

The exposition of this passage is twofold. The greater part of interpreters incline to this view, — that God here promises some alleviation to the Israelites, after having sharply reproved them, and threatened them with utter ruin. They therefore apply this passage to the kingdom of Christ, as though God gave hope of a future restoration. But when I narrowly weigh every thing, I am, on the contrary, forced to regard these two verses as a commination, that is, that the Prophet here denounces God's future vengeance on the people. As, however, the former opinion is almost universally received, I will briefly mention what has been adduced in its favor, and then I shall return to state the other meaning, which I prefer.

It is suitable to the kingdom of Christ to say, that a people who had been dispersed should be gathered under one head. We indeed know how miserable a dispersion there is in the world without him, and that whenever the Prophets speak of the renovation of the Church, they commonly make use of this form of expression, that is, that the Lord will gather the dispersed and unite them together under one head. If then the passage be referred to the kingdom of Christ, it is altogether proper to say,

that God *by gathering will gather the whole of Jacob*. But a restriction is afterwards added, that no one may extend this restoration to the whole race of Abraham, or to all those who, according to the flesh, derived their descent from Abraham as their father: hence the word שָׂרִית, *sharit*, is laid down. Then the whole of Jacob is not that multitude, which, according to the flesh, traced their origin from the holy Patriarchs, but only their residue. It then follows, *I will set them together as the sheep of Bozrah*, that is, I will make them to increase into a large, yea, into an immense number; for they shall make a tumult, that is, a great noise will be made by them, as though the place could not contain so large a number. And they explain the next verse thus, — *A breaker shall go before them*, that is, there shall be those who, with a hand, strong and armed, will make a way open for them; inasmuch as Christ says that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, (^{<401112>}Matthew 11:12) they then mean that the people will have courageous leaders, whom nothing will stop from breaking through, and that they will also lead the whole people with them. They shall therefore go forth through the gate, and their king shall pass through. This also well agrees with the kingdom of Christ. For whenever God declares that he will be propitious to his Church, he at the same time adds, that he will give a king to his people; for their safety had been placed in that kingdom, which had been erected by the authority and command of God himself. It is therefore a common thing, and what occurs everywhere in the Prophets, that God would give a king from the seed of David to his people, when it would be his will to favor them with complete happiness. Thus they understand that a king shall pass on before them, which is the office of a leader, to show them the way. *And Jehovah shall be at their head*; that is, God himself will show himself to be the chief king of his people, and will ever defend by his help and grace those whom he adopts as his people.

But I have already said that I more approve of another. exposition: for I see not how the Prophet could pass so suddenly into a different strain. He had said in the last verse that the people could endure no admonitions, for they only desired flatteries and adulation. He now joins what I have lately referred to respecting the near judgment of God, and proceeds, as we shall see, in the same strain to the end of the third chapter: but we know that the chapters were not divided by the Prophets themselves. We have therefore a discourse continued by the Prophet to the third chapter; not

that he spoke all these things in one day; but he wished to collect together what he had said of the vices of the people; and this will be more evident as we proceed. I will now come to the words.

Gathering, I will gather thee, the whole of Jacob; collecting, I will collect the remnant of Israel. God has two modes of gathering; for he sometimes gathers his people from dispersion, which is a singular proof of his favor and love. But he is said also to gather, when he assembles them together to devote and give them up to destruction, as we say in French, *Trousser*; and this verb is taken elsewhere in the same sense, and we have already met with an instance in Hosea. So, in the present passage, God declares that there would be a gathering of the people, — for what purpose? Not that being united together they might enjoy the blessings of God, but that they might be destroyed. As then the people had united together in all kinds of wickedness, so God now declares, that they should be gathered together, that the one and the same destruction might be to them all. And he adds, *the remnant of Israel*; as though he said, “Whatever shall remain from slaughters in wars and from all other calamities, such as famine and pestilence, this I will collect, that it may be wholly destroyed.” He mentions the remnant, because the Israelites had been worn out by many evils, before the Lord stretched forth his hand at last to destroy them.

He afterwards subjoins, *I will set them together as the sheep of Bozrah*; that is, I will cast them into one heap. Bozrah was a city or a country of Idumea; and it was a very fruitful place, and had the richest pastures: hence ^{<233401>} Isaiah 34, in denouncing vengeance on the Idumeans, alludes at the same time to their pastures, and says, “God will choose for himself fat lambs and whatever is well fed, and will also collect fatness, for the Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah.” So also, in this place, the Prophet says, that the Jews, when collected together as it were into a bundle, shall be like the *sheep of Bozrah*. And he further adds, *as the sheep in the middle of the sheepfolds*, though some render it, leading: דָּבַר, *daber*, sometimes means to lead; but I see no reason why it should be drawn so far from its meaning in this connection. I take it as signifying a sheepfold, because sheep are there collected together. Some interpreters consider that a siege is referred to here, that is, that God would confine the whole people within cities, that they might not be open to the incursions of enemies; but I extend the meaning much wider, namely, that God would gather the people, in order at last to disperse them. *I will then gather them*, as I have already said, *Je*

vous troussez; as the sheep of Bozrah in the middle of the sheep fold; and there shall be a noise on account of their number; that is, “Though ye now glory in your number, this will avail you nothing; for I shall be able to reduce you all to strait, so that you may, as ye deserve, perish together.”

It follows, *Ascend shall a breaker before them;* that is, they shall be led in confusion; and the gate shall also be broken, that they may go forth together; for the passage would not be large enough, were they, as is usually done, to go forth in regular order; but the gates of cities shall be broken, that they may pass through in great numbers and in confusion. By these words the Prophet intimates, that all would be quickly taken away into exile. *And they shall go forth, he says through the gate, and their king shall pass on before if them.* The Prophet means here, that the king would be made captive; and this was the saddest spectacle: for some hope remained, when the dregs of the people had been led into Chaldea; but when the king himself was led away a captive, and cast into prison, and his eyes pulled out, and his children slain, it was the greatest of misery. They were wont to take pride in their king, for they thought that their kingdom could not but continue perpetually, since God had so promised. But God might for a time overturn that kingdom, that he might afterwards raise it anew, according to what has been done by Christ, and according to what had been also predicted by the Prophets. “Crosswise, crosswise, crosswise, (*transversa*) let the crown be, until its lawful possessor comes.” We then see that this, which the Prophet mentions respecting their king, has been added for the sake of amplifying.

He afterwards adds, *Jehovah shall be at the head of them;* that is, He will be nigh them, to oppress and wholly to overwhelm them. Some consider something to be understood, and of this kind, that Jehovah was wont formerly to rule over them, but that now he would cease to do so: but this is too strained; and the meaning which I have stated seems sufficiently clear, and that is, — that God himself would be the doer, when they should be driven into exile, and that he would add courage to tyrants and their attendants, in pursuing the accursed people, in order to urge on more and more and aggravate their calamities and thus to show that their destruction vault happen through his righteous judgment. We now then understand the real meaning of the Prophet.^{F32} Now follows —

CHAPTER 3

<330301> MICAH 3:1-3

1. And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?

1. Et dixi, Audite quaeso principes Jacob et gubernatores domus Israel; annon vestrum est (vel, ad vos spectat) scire iudicium?

2. Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones;

2. Atqui oderunt bonum et dilligunt malum, rapiunt pellem ab ipsis, et carnem ab ossibus eorum;

3. Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron.

3. Et tunc vorant carnem populi mei, et pellem ipsorum ab ipsis excoriant; et ossa eorum frangunt, et comminuunt; sicuti ad ollam (vel, ac si destinata essent ollae,) et carnem eorum in medio aheni.

The Prophet in this chapter assails and severely reproveth the chief men as well as the teachers; for both were given to avarice and cruelty, to plunder, and, in short, to all other vices. And he begins with the magistrates, who exercised authority among the people; and briefly relates the words in which he inveighed against them. We have said elsewhere, that the Prophets did not record all that they had spoken, but only touched shortly on the heads or chief points: and this was done by Micah, that we might know what he did for forty or more years, in which he executed his office. He could have related, no doubt, in half-an-hour, all that exists of his writings: but from this small book, however small it is, we may learn what was the Prophet's manner of teaching, and on what things he chiefly dwelt. I will now return to his words.

He says that the chief men of the kingdom had been reproved by him. It is probable, that these words were addressed to the Jews; for though at the

beginning he includes the Israelites, we yet know that he was given as a teacher to the Jews, and not to the kingdom of Israel. It was as it were accidental, that he sometimes introduces the ten tribes together with the Jews. This address then was made, as I think, to the king as well as to his counselors and other judges, who then ruled over the people of Judah.

Hear this, I pray, he says. Such a preface betokens carelessness in the judges; for why does he demand a hearing from them, except that they had become so torpid in their vices, that they would attend to nothing?

Inasmuch then as so brutal a stupor had seized on them, he says, *Hear now ye chiefs, or heads, of Jacob, and ye rulers*^{F33} *of the house of Israel.*

But why does he still speak of the house of Israel? Because that name was especially known and celebrated, whenever a mention was made of the posterity of Abraham: and the other Prophets, even while speaking of the kingdom of Judah, often make use of this title, “ye who are called by the name of Israel;” and they did this, on account of the dignity of the holy Patriarch; and the meaning of the word itself was no ordinary testimonial of excellency as to his whole race. And this is what is frequently done by Isaiah. But the name of Israel is not put here, as elsewhere, as a title of distinction: on the contrary, the Prophet here amplifies their sin, because they were so corrupt, though they were the chief men among the chosen race, being those whom God had honored with so much dignity, as to set them over his Church and elect people. It was then an ingratitude, not to be endured to abuse that high and sacred authority, which had been conferred on them by God.

Does it not belong to you, he says, to know judgment? Here he intimates that rectitude ought to have a place among the chief men, in a manner more especial than among the common people; for it behoves them to excel others in the knowledge of what is just and right: for though the difference between good and evil be engraven on the hearts of all, yet they, who hold supremacy among the people, and excel in power, are as it were the eyes of the community; as the eyes direct the whole body, so also they, who are placed in any situation of honor, are thus made eminent, that they may show the right way to others. Hence by the word, to *know*, the Prophet intimates that they wickedly subverted the whole order of nature, for they were blind, while they ought to have been the luminaries of the whole people. *Is it not for you, he says, to know judgment* and equity? But why was this said, especially to the chief men? Because they, though they of

themselves knew what was right, having the law engraven within ought yet as leaders to have possessed superior knowledge, so as to outshine others. It is therefore your duty to know judgment. We hence learn that it is not enough for princes and magistrates to be well disposed and upright; but it is required of them to know judgment and wisdom that they may discern matters above the common people. But if they are not thus endued with the gift of understanding and wisdom let them ask of the Lord. We indeed know, that without the Spirit of God, the acutest men are wholly unfit to rule; nor is it in vain, that the free Spirit of God is set forth, as holding the supreme power in the world; for we are thus reminded, that even they who are endued with the chief gifts are wholly incapable of governing except the Spirit of God be with them. This passage then shows that an upright mind is not a sufficient qualification in princes; they must also excel in wisdom, that they may be, as we have already said, as the eyes are to the body. In this sense it is that Micah now says that it belonged to the leaders of the people to know judgment and justice. ^{F34}

He afterwards subjoins, *But they hate good, and love evil, and pull off the skin* ^{F35} *from my people, the flesh from their bones*; that is, they leave nothing, he says, sound and safe, their rapacity being so furious. The Prophet conveys first a general reproof, — that they not only perverted justice, but were also given to wickedness and hated good. He means then that they were openly wicked and ungodly, and also that they with a fixed purpose carried on war against every thing just and right. We hence learn how great and how abominable was the corruption of the people, when they were still the peculiar possession and heritage of God. Inasmuch then as the state of this ancient people had become so degenerated, let us learn to walk in solicitude and fear, while the Lord governs us by pious magistrates and faithful pastors: for what happened to the Jews might soon happen to us, so that wolves might bear rule over us, as indeed experience has proved even in this our city. The Prophet afterwards adds the kinds of cruelty which prevailed; of which he speaks in hyperbolical terms, though no doubt he sets before our eyes the state of things as it was. He compares the judges to wolves or to lions, or to other savage beasts. He says not that they sought the property of the people, or pillaged their houses; but he says that they devoured their flesh even to the very bones; he says that they pulled off their skin: and this he confirms in the next verse.

They devour, he says, the flesh of my people, and their skin they strip off from them, and their bones they break in pieces and make small, as that which into the pot is thrown, and which is in the midst of the caldron.^{F36}

For when any one throws meat into the pot, he does not take the whole ox, but cuts it into pieces, and having broken it, he then fills with these pieces his pot or his caldron. The Prophet then enhances the cruelty of the princes; they were not content with one kind of oppression, but exercised every species of barbarous cruelty towards the people, and were in every respect like bears, or wolves, or lions, or some other savage beasts, and that they were also like gluttons. We now then perceive the Prophet's meaning.

Now this passage teaches us what God requires mainly from those in power, — that they abstain from doing injustice: for as they are armed with power, so they ought to be a law to themselves. They assume authority over others; let them then begin with themselves, and restrain themselves from doing evil. For when a private man is disposed to do harm, he is restrained at least by fear of the laws, and dares not to do any thing at his pleasure; but in princes there is a greater boldness; and they are able to do greater injustice: and this is the reason why they ought to observe more forbearance and humanity. Hence levity and paternal kindness especially become princes and those in power. But the Prophet here condemns the princes of his age for what deserved the highest reprehension; and their chief crime was cruelty or inhumanity, inasmuch as they spared not their own subjects.

We now see that the Prophet in no degree flattered the great, though they took great pride in their own dignity. But when he saw that they wickedly and basely abused the power committed to them, he boldly resisted them, and exercised the full boldness of the Spirit. He therefore not only calls them robbers or plunderers of the people; but he says, that they were cruel wild beasts; he says, that they devoured the flesh, tore and pulled it in pieces, and made it small; and he says all this, that he might convey an idea of the various kinds of cruelty which they practiced. Now follow threatenings —

<330304> MICAH 3:4

4. Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.

4. Tunc clamabunt ad Jehovam, et non respondebit illis; sed abscondet faciem suam ab ipsis tempore illo, quemadmodum perverse egerunt in factis suis.

Micah now denounces judgment on the chief men, such as they deserved. He says, *They shall cry then to Jehovah*. The adverb **אז**, *az*, is often put indefinitely in Hebrew, and has the force of a demonstrative, and may be taken as pointing out a thing, (**δεικτικως** — demonstratively,) *then*, or there, as though the Prophet pointed out by his finger things which could be seen, though they were far away from the sight of men. But in this place, the Prophet seems rather to pursue the subject to which I have already referred: for he had before stated that God would take vengeance on that people. This adverb of time then is connected with the other combinations, which have been already explained.^{F37} If, however, any one prefer a different meaning, namely that the Prophet meant here to hold them in suspense, as to the nearness of God's vengeance, I do not oppose him, for this sense is not unsuitable. However this may be, the Prophet here testifies that the crimes of the chief men would not go unpunished, though they did not think themselves to be subject either to laws or to punishment. As then the princes and magistrates regarded themselves as exempt, by some imaginary privilege, from the lot of other people, the Prophet declares here expressly, that a distress was nigh at hand, which would extort a cry from them: for by the word, cry, he means the miseries which were nigh at hand. *They shall then cry* in their distress. I have now explained the design of the Prophet.

We indeed see how at this day those who are in high stations swell with arrogance; for as they abound in wealth, and as honor is as it were an elevated degree, so that being propped up by the shoulders of others they seem eminent, and as they are also feared by the rest of the people, they are on these accounts led to think that no adversity can happen to them. But the Prophet says, that such would be their distress, that it would draw a cry from them.

They shall then cry, but Jehovah *will not hear*; that is, they shall be miserable and without any remedy. Jehovah *will not answer them, but will hide from them his face, as they have done perversely*; that is, God will not hear their complaints; for he will return on their own heads all the injuries with which he now sees his own people to be afflicted. And thus God will show that he was not asleep, while they were with so much effrontery practicing all kinds of wrong.

It may however be asked here, how it is that God rejects the prayers and entreaties of those who cry to him? It must first be observed, that the reprobate, though they rend the air with their cries, do not yet direct their prayers to God; but if they address God himself, they do this clamorously; for they expostulate with him, and contend with him, yea, they vomit out their blasphemies, or at least they murmur and complain of their evils. The ungodly then cry, but not to the Lord; or if they address their cries to God, they are, as it has been said, full of glamour. Hence, except one is guided by the Spirit of God, he cannot pray from the heart. And we know that it is the peculiar office of the Spirit to raise up our hearts to heaven: for in vain we pray, except we bring faith and repentance: and who is the author of these but the Holy Spirit? It appears then that the ungodly so cry, that they only violently contend with God: but this is not the right way of praying. It is therefore no wonder that God rejects their clamors. The ungodly do indeed at times pour forth a flood of prayers and call on God's name with the mouth; but at the same time they are, as we have said, full of perverseness, and they never really humble themselves before God. Since then they pour forth their prayers from a bitter and a proud heart, this is the reason why the Prophet says now, that the Lord *would not then hear, but hide his face from them at that time, inasmuch as they acted perversely.*^{F38}

He shows here that God would not be reconciled to men wholly irreclaimable, who could not be restored by any means to the right way. But when any one falls [and repents] he will ever find God propitious to him, as soon as he cries to him; but when with obstinate minds we pursue our own course, and give no place to repentance, we close up the door of mercy against ourselves; and so what the Prophet teaches here necessarily takes place, — the Lord hides his face in the day of distress. And we also hear what the Scripture says, — that judgment will be without mercy to those who are not merciful, (<⁵⁹⁰²¹¹> James 2:11.) Hence if any one be

inexorable to his brethren, (as we see at this day many tyrants to be, and we also see many in the middle class to be of the same tyrannical and wholly sanguinary disposition,) he will at length ,whoever he may be, meet with that judgment which Micah here denounces. The sentence then is not to be taken in a general sense, as though he had said, that the Lord would not be reconciled to the wicked; but he points out especially those irreclaimable men, who had wholly hardened themselves, so that they had become, as we have already seen, altogether inflexible. The Prophet now comes to his second reproof.

<330305> **MICAH 3:5**

5. Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.

5. sic dicit Jehova super (vel, ad) prophetas, qui decipiunt populum meum, et mordent dentibus suis, et clamant, Paz; et si quis non dederit in os ipsorum, edicunt contra eum proelium:

Micah accuses here the Prophets, in the first place, of avarice and of a desire for filthy lucre. But he begins by saying that he spoke by God’s command, and as it were from his mouth, in order that his combination might have more weight and power. *Thus* then *saith Jehovah against the Prophets*: and he calls them the deceivers of the people: but at the same time he points out the source of the evil, that is, why or by what passion they were instigated to deceive, and that was, because the desire of gain had wholly possessed them, so that they made no difference between what was true and what was false, but only sought to please for the sake of gain. And he shows also, on the other hand, that they were so covetous of gain, that they *declared war*, if any one did not feed them. And God repeats again the name of his people: this had escaped my notice lately in observing on the words of Micah, that the princes devoured the flesh of God’s people; for the indignity was increased when this wrong, was done to the people of God. Had the Assyrians, or the Ethiopians, or the Egyptians, been pillaged by their princes, it would have been more tolerable; but when the very people of God were thus devoured, it was, as I have said, less to be borne. So when the people of God were deceived, and the truth was turned to a lie, it was a sacrilege the more hateful.

This then was the reason why he said, *Who deceive my people.*^{F39} “This people is sacred to me, for I have chosen them for myself; as then they are destroyed by frauds and deceptions, is not my majesty in a manner dishonored — is not my authority lessened?” We now then see the reason why the Prophet says, *They deceive my people.* It is indeed certain, that the Jews were worthy of such deceptions; and God elsewhere declares, that whenever he permitted false prophets to come among them, it was to try them to see what sort of people they were, (<⁰⁵¹³⁰¹> Deuteronomy 13.) It was then their just reward, when liberty was given to Satan to prevent sound doctrine among the people. And no one is ever deceived, except through his own will. Though their own simplicity seems to draw many to destruction, yet there is ever in them some hypocrisy. But it does not extenuate the sin of false teachers, that the people deserve such a punishment: and hence the Prophet still goes on with his reproof and says, that they were the people of God, — in what respect? By adoption. Though then the Jews had rendered themselves unworthy of such an honor, yet God counts them his people, that he might punish the wickedness of the false teachers, of which he now accuses them. It now follows, that they did *bite with their teeth.* But I cannot finish today.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou wouldest have the image of thy justice to shine in princes, and whom thou arrest with the sword, that they might rule in thy name, and be really thy ministers, — O grant, that this thy blessing may openly appear among us, and that by this evidence thou mayest testify that thou art not only propitious to us, but hadst also a care for our safety, and watches over our welfare and well-being: and do thou so shine by thy word, that it may never be obscured or clouded among us through any depraved cupidity, but ever retain its own clear purity, so that we may proceed in the right path of salvation, which thou hast discovered and prescribed, until we be at length gathered into thy celestial kingdom, to enjoy that eternal inheritance, which has been procured for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. Amen.

LECTURE EIGHTY-SIXTH

Let us proceed to explain that sentence of the Prophet, in which he shows the cause why the teachers deceived the people and turned the truth of God to a lie; and this was, because they were greedy of gains and were wholly given to avarice. We hence see, according to the testimony of Paul, that avarice affords a cause to all evils, (^{<540610>} 1 Timothy 6:10;) and that wherever this contagion comes, all things necessarily fall into decay: for when avarice reigns in the hearts of men, the truth of God especially is ever adulterated.

But Micah adduces two evidences of avarice, — that they *cried, Peace*, when well fed and filled, — and that they proclaimed war, when they were hungry. Then as to the first points he says, **בשניהם וקראו שלום הנשכים**, that is, “who bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace.” But the sentence is to be so understood, that when they did *bite* well, they announced peace with full confidence: for by the word, bite, the Prophet means their gormandizing; for they who, under the guise of God’s name, sought only their own advantage, were not satisfied with a moderate support, inasmuch as they were like hungry dogs. They therefore devoured, and gorged themselves, without any limits or moderation. This is the reason why he says that they did bite: for he compares them either to lions or to bears; and we know that wild beasts are not satiated with a small quantity of food, but that they gnash as it were their teeth except they are always pampered. So also Micah says, that the false teachers of his age were voracious men, who demanded a large proportion of food. We see the same thing in our day as to the monks under the Papacy, especially those who, under the name of mendacity, devour the substance of all people. Except they are pampered, they always murmur; nay, they are not content with murmurs, they proclaim war, as the Prophet says here. We indeed see at the same time, that they are insatiable; for when they come to tables well furnished, no one would say that they are men, but beasts, for they devour every thing. We now then understand the Prophet’s meaning.

But it is not voracity alone that is reprehended: he says, that they sold their blessings. when they were well filled and had their stomach well supplied. In the same manner the monks also are wont to pronounce peace

when they are well fed, — “O! ye do good, when ye take care of the brethren; for they are careful of you: when ye sleep in your beds, they watch, and their prayers make you rich; for how could the world stand, were it not that the brethren make amends for it? As then ye are so kind to our community, all things shall turn out well and prosperously to you, and God also will bless you.” This then is the practice of those who for reward sell their blessings; they cry, Peace, that is, they confidently declare that all things shall be well, they make God propitious, provided such liberality towards their order be ever continued.

But, on the other hand, he also says, *If any one gives not to their mouth, they instantly sanctify war against you*^{F40}: but I give a different rendering, as the passage requires, — that they reclaim war; though the word is literally to sanctify. But we have seen in ^{<290201>} Joel 2, that the word is used to designate any solemn proclamation, — “Sanctify a fast”, that is, Proclaim a fast. So also in this place, They sanctify war, that is, they proclaim war, when any one does not feed them, nor satisfy their gormandizing; for they could not bear want. In short, the Prophet shows, that these false teachers were so blinded by avarice, that they discerned not the difference between right and wrong; but only praised those who fed them: and, on the other hand, when they found that they and their stomach were not cared for nor satisfied, they cursed, fulminated, and uttered nothing but anathemas; as we see to be done at this day by the monks under the Papacy. The Prophet now says —

<330306> MICAH 3:6-7

6. Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them.

7. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.

6. Propterea nox vobis erit a visione (vel, pro visione, vel propter visionem; dicemus postea de sensu,) et tenebrae vobis a divinatione (vel, propter divinationem,) et occumbet sol super prophetas, et obtenebrabitur super eos dies;

7. Et pudefient videntes (hoc est, prophetae,) et erubescant divini, et velabunt (hoc est, velum opponent) super labium suum omnes; quia non erit responsum Dei.

God declares here to the false teachers by the mouth of Micah, that he would inflict punishment on them, so that they should be exposed to the reproach of all. Hence the kind of punishment of which the Prophet speaks is — that he would strip the false teachers of all their dignity, so that they should hereafter in vain put on an appearance, and claim the honorable name which they had so long abused. We indeed know, when ungodly and profane men clothe themselves with the dignified titles of being the princes, or bishops, or prelates of the Church, how audaciously they pervert every thing, and do so with impunity. There is then no other remedy, except God pulls off the mask from them, and openly discovers to all their baseness. Of this punishment Micah now speaks.

There shall be to you a night from vision; so is the phrase literally, but the particle **⁂**, *mem*, means often, for, or, on account of; and we can easily see that the Prophet represents night as the reward for visions and darkness for divination. “As then my people have been deceived by your fallacies, for your visions and divinations have been nothing but lies and deceits, I will repay you with the reward which you have deserved: for instead of a vision you shall have night, and instead of divination you shall have thick darkness.”^{F41} It is indeed certain, that the false teachers, even when they were, as they say, in great reputation, that is, when they retained the honor and the title of their office, were blind and wholly destitute of all light: but the Prophet here declares, that as their baseness did not appear

to the common people, God would cause it to be made at length fully evident. As for instance, there is nothing at this day more stupid and senseless than the bishops of the Papacy: for when any one draws from them any expression about religion, they instantly betray not only their ignorance, but also their shameful stupidity. With regard to the monks, though they be the most audacious kind of animals, (*audacissimum animalium genus*;) yet we know how unlearned and ignorant they are. Therefore at this time the night has not yet passed away, nor the darkness, of which Micah speaks here.

We now then understand what the Holy Spirit teaches here, and that is, — that God would at length strip those false teachers of that imaginary dignity, on account of which no one dared to speak against them, but received as an oracle whatever they uttered. *Night*, then, *shall be to you instead of a vision*; that is, “The whole world shall understand that you are not what you boast yourselves to be: for I will show that there is not in you, no, not a particle of the prophetic spirit, but that ye are men as dark as night, and darkness shall be to you instead of divination. Ye boast of great acuteness and great perspicuity of mind; but I will discover your baseness, so that the very children may know that you are not endued with the spirit.”

To the same purpose is what he adds, *Go down shall the sun upon you, and darkened over you shall be the day*; that is, such will be that darkness, that even at noon they will see nothing; the sun will shine on all, but they shall grope as in the dark; so that Gods vengeance would be made so manifest, that it might be noticed by all, from the least to the greatest.

He confirms the same thing in the next verse, *And ashamed shall be the seers and confounded the diviners,*^{F42} *and they shall cover their lip*; that is they will put veils on their mouths. In short, he means, that they would become a reproach to all, so that they would be ashamed of themselves, and no more dare to boast with so much confidence of their name and of the prophetic office.

As to this form of expression, **ועטו על שפם**, *uothu ol shephim*, some think that the practice of mourners is referred to; but this interpretation is frigid. I have therefore no doubt but that Micah intimates that the mouths of the false teachers would be closed. There is nearly the same denunciation mentioned by Zechariah; for speaking of the restoration of

the Church, he says, — They who before went about boasting greatly, and gloried in the name of Prophets, shall cast away their mantle, and will no longer dare to show themselves; yea, when they shall come abroad, they shall be as it were herdsman or private persons, and shall say, “I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, I am chastised by my father;” that is, they shall profess themselves unworthy of being called prophets; but that they are scholars under discipline, (<381305>Zechariah 13:5.) So also in this place, “They deceive at this day my people,” saith the Lord; “I will reward them as they deserve; I will fill them with disgrace and contempt. They shall not then dare hereafter to show themselves as they have been wont to do; they shall not presume boastingly to profess themselves to be the pillars of the Church, that the whole world may be made subject to them; they shall not dare with tyrannical force to oppress the common and ignorant portions of society. *Veil, then, shall they their mouth;* that is, “I will cause their mouth to be closed, so that they shall not dare hereafter to utter even a word.” ^{F43}

It follows, *For there will be no answer from God.* Some so explain this sentence, as though the Prophet upbraided them with their old deceits, which they boasted were the words of God: as then they were not faithful to God, but lied to miserable men, when they said, that they were sent from above, and brought messages from heaven, while they only uttered their own inventions or fables, they should on these accounts be constrained to cover their mouth. But different is the meaning of the Prophet, and it is this, — that they were to be deprived of any answer, so that their want of knowledge might be easily perceived even by the most ignorant: for false teachers, though they possess nothing certain, yet deceive the simple with disguises, and render plausible their absurdities, that they may seem to be the interpreters of God; and they further add great confidence: and then the stupidity of the people concedes to them such great power, according to what is said by Jeremiah 5 where he says that the priests received gifts and that for gifts the Prophets divined, and that the people loved such deprivations. But Micah declares here that such delusions would no longer be allowed, for God would dissipate them. It will then be made evident, that *you have no answer from God;* that is, “All will perceive that you are void and destitute of every celestial truth, and that you were formerly but gross cheats, when ye passed yourselves as God’s servants, though you had no ground for doing so.”

We now perceive what the Prophet means. But this punishment might have then contributed to the benefit of the people: for as it is a cause of ruin to the world, when there is no difference made between light and darkness; so when the baseness of those is discovered, who abuse God's name and adulterate his pure truth, there is then a door open to repentance. Rightly then is this combination addressed to false prophets. It now follows —

<330308> MICAH 3:8	
<p>8. But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.</p>	<p>8. Atqui vere ego repletus sum virtute a Spiritu Jehovae, et iudicio, et fortitudine, ad annuntiandum Jacob scelus suum, et Israeli peccatum suum.</p>

Here Micah, in a courageous spirit, stands up alone against all the false teachers even when he saw that they were a large number, and that they appealed to their number, according to their usual practice, as their shield. Hence he says, *I am filled with power by the Spirit of Jehovah.*^{F44} This confidence is what all God's servants should possess, that they may not succumb to the empty and vain boastings of those who subvert the whole order of the Church. Whenever then, God permits his pure truth to be corrupted by false teachers, and them to be popular among those high in honor, as well as the multitude, let this striking example be remembered by us, lest we be discouraged, lest the firmness and invincible power of the Holy Spirit be weakened in our hearts, but that we may proceed in the course of our calling, and learn to oppose the name of God to all the deceptions of men, if indeed we are convinced that our service is approved by him, as being faithful. Since, then, Micah says, that he was *filled with power*, he no doubt stood, as it were, in the presence of the whole people, and alone pitched his camp against the whole multitude; for there were then false teachers going about every where, as the devil sows always seed enough, whenever God lets loose the reins. Though then their number was not small, yet Micah hesitated not to go forth among them: I, he says; there is stress to be laid on the pronoun אֲנִי, *anki*, — Ye despise me, being one man, and ye despise a few men; ye may think that I alone serve the Lord; but I am a match for a thousand, yea, for an innumerable

multitude; for God is on my side, and he approves of my ministry as it is from him, nor do I bring any thing to you but what he has commanded: It is then I.

He further expresses a fuller confidence by using the word אֱלָם, *aulam*^{F45}; *Verily*, he says, *I am filled with power*. This “verily” or truly is opposed to those lofty boastings by which the false prophets were ever wont to attain a name and honor among the people. But Micah intimates that all that they uttered was only evanescent: “Ye are,” he says, “wonderful prophets; nay, ye are superior to the angels, if you are to be believed; but show that you are so in reality; let there be some proof by which your calling can be confirmed. There is no proof. It then follows, that ye are only men of wind, and not really spiritual: but there is really in me what ye boast of with your mouths.” And he says, that he was *filled*, that he might not be thought one of the common sort: and Micah no doubt shows here, on account of the necessity of the occasion, that he was not supplied with ordinary or usual power; for, according as God employs the labors of his servants, so is he present with them, and furnishes them with suitable protection. When any one is not exercised with great difficulties in discharging his office of teaching, a common measure of the Spirit is only necessary for the performance of his duties; but when any one is drawn into arduous and difficult struggles, he is at the same time especially strengthened by the Lord: and we see daily examples of this; for many simple men, who have never been trained up in learning, have yet been so endued by the celestial Spirit, when they came to great trials, that they have closed the mouths of great doctors, who seemed to understand all oracles. By such evidences God openly proves at this day, that he is the same now as when he formerly endued his servant Micah with a power so rare and so extraordinary. This then is the reason why he says, that he was filled with power.

He afterwards adds, *By the Spirit of Jehovah*. Here the Prophet casts aside every suspicious token of arrogance; lest he should seem to claim anything as his own, he says, that this power was conferred on him from above: and this circumstance ought to be particularly noticed. Though Micah rightly and justly claimed to himself the name of a teacher, he yet had nothing different from others before the world; for all his opponents discharged the same office, and obtained the same honor: the office was common to both parties. Micah was either alone, or connected with Isaiah and a few others.

Since then he here dares to set up himself, we see that his call alone must be regarded; for we know how great is the propensity of Satan to oppose the kingdom of Christ, and also how proud and fierce are false teachers. Since then the rage of Satan is well known and the presumption of false teachers, there is no reason why the faithful should make much of mere naked titles: and when they, who lived at that time, declared, as Papists do at this day, that they had no discrimination nor judgment to know, whether of them ought to have been deemed impostors or the ministers of God, inasmuch as Micah was alone and they were many, and also that the others were prophets that at least they had the name and repute of being so, — what was to be done? This was the reason why I have said that this circumstance was worthy of special notice, — that though their vocation was common, yet as they had acted perfidiously, and Micah alone, or with few others, had faithfully performed what the Lord had commanded, he alone is to be deemed a Prophet and a teacher: in short, there is no reason for false prophets to set up against us a mere coveting, when they cannot prove that they are endued with the Spirit of God. Whosoever then desires to be deemed a servant of God, and a teacher in his Church, must have this seal which Micah here adduces; he must be endued with the Spirit of God; honor then will be given to God. But if any one brings nothing but the name, we see how vain before God it is.

He afterwards subjoins *With judgment and courage. (fortitudine)* By judgment, I have no doubt, he understands discernment, as this is also the common meaning of the word. He then adds *courage*. These two things are especially necessary for all ministers of the word, — that is, to excel in wisdom, to understand what is true and right, and to be also endued with inflexible firmness, by which they may overcome both Satan and the whole world, and never turn aside from their course, though the devil may in all ways assail them. We hence see what these two words import. He had put כֹּחַ, *kech*, first, power; but now he mentions גְּבוּרָה, *gebure*, courage or magnanimity. By the term, power, he meant generally all the endowments, with which all who take upon them the office of teaching ought to be adorned. This qualification is then first required, and it is a general one: but Micah divides this power of the prophets into two kinds, even into wisdom or judgment, and into courage; and he did this, that they might understand what God intended: Let them excel in doctrine; and then that they may be confirmed, let them not yield to any gales that may blow, nor

be overcome by threats and terrors; let them not bend here and there to please the world; in a word, let them not succumb to any corruptions: it is therefore necessary to add courage to judgment.

He then adds, *To declare to Jacob his wickedness,*^{F46} *and to Israel his sin.* We here see that the Prophet did not hunt for the favor of the people. Had he courted their approbation, he must have soothed with flatteries those who sought flatteries; and were already seized with such hatred and malignant feelings, that they had rejected Micah. He must then have spoken softly to them, to please them; but this he did not do. “On the one hand,” he says, “these men sell to you their blessings and deceive you with the hope of peace; and, on the other, they denounce war, except their voracity is satisfied; and thus it is that they please you; for so ye wish, and ye seek such teachers as will promise you wine and strong drink: but I am sent to you for another purpose; for the Lord has not deposited flatteries with me, such as may be pleasant to you; but he has deposited reproofs and threatenings. I shall therefore uncover your crimes, and will not hesitate to condemn you before the whole world, for ye deserve to be thus treated.” We now perceive why the Prophet says, that he was endued with power to *declare his wickedness to Jacob, etc.*

But we hence learn how necessary it is for us to be supported by celestial firmness, when we have to do with insincere and wicked men; and this is almost the common and uniform lot of all God’s servants; for all who are sent to teach the word are sent to carry on a contest. It is therefore not enough to teach faithfully what God commands, except we also contend: and though the wicked may violently rise up against us, we must yet put on a brazen front, as it is said in ^{<260308>} Ezekiel 3:8, 9; nor must we yield to their fury, but preserve invincible firmness. Since then we have a contest with the devil, with the world, and with all the wicked, that we may faithfully execute our office, we must be furnished with this courage of which Micah speaks.

As I have already shown that God’s servants ought courageously to break through all those obstacles by which Satan may attempt either to delay or to force them backward; so also the doctrine taught here ought to be applied to all the godly: they ought wisely to distinguish between the faithful servants of God and impostors who falsely pretend his name. Then no one, who desires truly and from the heart to obey God, will be

deceived; for the Lord will ever give the spirit of judgment and discrimination. And the reason why at this day many miserable souls are led to endless ruin is, because they either shut their eyes, or willfully dissemble, or designedly involve themselves in such subterfuges as these, — “I cannot form any judgment; I see on both sides learned and celebrated men, at least those who are in some repute and esteem: some call me to the right hand, and others to the left, where am I to retake myself? I therefore prefer to close my mouth and my ears.” Thus many, seeking a cloak for their sloth, often manifest their ignorance: for we see that the eyes must be opened when the Lord exercises and tries our faith: and he suffers discords and contentions to arise in the Church that some may choose this, and others that. Though God then relaxes the reins of Satan, that contests and turmoils of this kind may be excited in the Church, there is yet no excuse for us, if we follow not what the Lord prescribes; for he will ever guide us by his Spirit, provided we foster not our own slothfulness. It follows—

<330309> MICAH 3:9-10	
9. Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity.	9. Audite hoc, quaeso, principes domus Jacob, et gubernatores domus Israel, qui abominantur (est mutatio personae) iudicium, et recitudinem omnem pervertunt;
10. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.	10. Qui aedificat ^{F47} (<i>nunc est mutatio numeri</i>) Sionem in sanguinibus, et Jerusalem in iniquitate.

The Prophet begins really to prove what he had stated, — that he was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: and it was, as they say, an actual proof, when the Prophet dreaded no worldly power, but boldly addressed the princes and provoked their rage against him, *Hear*, he says, *ye heads, ye rulers of the house of Jacob*, ye men who are cruel, bloody, and iniquitous. We then see that the Prophet had not boasted of what he did not without delay really confirm. But he began with saying, that he was filled with the Spirit of God, that he might more freely address them, and that he might check their insolence. We indeed know that the ungodly are so led on headlong by Satan, that they hesitate not to resist God himself: but yet the name of God is often to them a sort of a hidden chain.

However much then the wicked may rage, they yet become less ferocious when the name of God is introduced. This is the reason why the Prophet had mentioned the Spirit of God; it was, that there might be a freer course to his doctrine.

When he now says, *Ye heads of the house of Jacob, ye rulers of the house of Israel*, it is by way of concession, as though he had said, that these were indeed splendid titles, and that he was not so absurd as not to acknowledge what had been given them by God, even that they were eminent, a chosen race, being the children of Abraham. The Prophet then concedes to the princes what belonged to them, as though he had said, that he was not a seditious man, who had no care nor consideration for civil order. And this defense was very necessary, for nothing is more common than for the ungodly to charge God's servants with sedition, whenever they use a freedom of speech as it becomes them. Hence all who govern the state, when they hear their corruptions reprov'd, or their avarice, or their cruelty, or any of their other crimes, immediately cry out, — "What! if we suffer these things, every thing will be upset: for when all respect is gone, what will follow but brutal outrage? for every one of the common people will rise up against the magistrates and the judges." Thus then the wicked ever say, that God's servants are seditious whenever they boldly reprove them. This is the reason why the Prophet concedes to the princes and judges of the people their honor; but a qualifying clause immediately follows, — Ye are indeed the heads, ye are rulers; but yet *they hate judgment*:" he does not think them worthy of being any longer addressed. He had indeed bidden them to hear as with authority; but having ordered them to hear, he now uncovers their wickedness, *They hate*, he says, *judgments and all rectitude pervert*:^{F48} each of them *builds Zion by blood, and Jerusalem by iniquity*; that is, they turn their pillages into buildings: "This, forsooth, is the splendor of my holy city even of Zion! where I designed the ark of my covenant to be placed, as in my only habitation, even there buildings are seen constructed by blood and by plunder! See, he says, how wickedly these princes conduct themselves under the cover of their dignity!"^{F49}

We now see that the word of God is not bound, but that it puts forth its power against the highest as well as the lowest; for it is the Spirit's office to arraign the whole world, and not a part only.

‘When the Spirit shall come,’ says Christ,
‘it will convince the world,’ (<431608> John 16:8.)

He speaks not there of the common people only, but of the whole world, of which princes and magistrates form a prominent part. Let us then know, that though we ought to show respect to judges, (as the Lord has honored them with dignified titles, calling them his vicegerents and also gods,) yet the mouths of Prophets ought not to be closed; but they ought, without making any difference, to correct whatever is deserving of reproof, and not to spare even the chief men themselves. This is what ought in the first place to be observed.

Then when he says, that Zion *was built by blood, and Jerusalem by iniquity*, it is the same as though the Prophet had said, that whatever the great men expended on their palaces had been procured, and, as it were, scraped together from blood and plunder. The judges could not have possibly seized on spoils on every side, without being bloody, that is, without pillaging the poor: for the judges were for the most part corrupted by the rich and the great; and then they destroyed the miserable and the innocent. He then who is corrupted by money will become at the same time a thief; and he will not only extort money, but will also shed blood. There is then no wonder that Micah says, that Zion was *built by blood*. He afterwards extends wider his meaning and mentions *iniquity*, as he wished to cast off every excuse from hypocrites. The expression is indeed somewhat strong, when he says, that Zion was built by blood. They might have objected and said, that they were not so cruel, though they could not wholly clear themselves from the charge of avarice. “When I speak of blood,” says the Prophet, “there is no reason that we should contend about a name; for all iniquity is blood before God: if then your houses have been built by plunder, your cruelty is sufficiently proved; it is as though miserable and innocent men had been slain by your own hands.” The words, *Zion* and *Jerusalem*, enhance their sin; for they polluted the holy city and the mount on which the temple was built by the order and command of God.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou wouldest have us to be ruled by the preaching of thy word, — O grant, that those who have to

discharge this office may be really endued with thy celestial power, that they may not attempt any thing of themselves, but with all devotedness spend all their labors for thee and for our benefit, that through them we may be thus edified, so that thou mayest ever dwell among us, and that we through our whole life may become the habitation of thy Majesty, and that finally we may come to thy heavenly sanctuary, where thou daily invites us, as an entrance there has been once for all opened to us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. Amen.

LECTURE EIGHTY-SEVENTH

<330311> MICAH 3:11-12

11. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us.

11. Principes ejus pro munere judicant, et sacerdotes ejus mercede docent, et prophetae ejus pecunia divinant, et super Jehova nituntur, dicendo, Annon Jehova in medio nostri? Non veniet super nos malum.

12. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed *as* a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

12. Itaque propter vos Sion ut ager arabitur, et Jerusalem acervus erit, et mons domus in excelsa sylvae. ^{F50}

The Prophet shows here first, how gross and supine was the hypocrisy of princes as well as of the priests and prophets: and then he declares that they were greatly deceived in thus soothing themselves with vain flatteries; for the Lord would punish them for their sins since he had in his forbearance spared them, and found that they did not repent. But he does not address here the common people or the multitude, but he attacks the chief men: for he has previously told us, that he was endued with the spirit of courage. It was indeed necessary for the Prophet to be prepared with invincible firmness that he might freely and boldly declare the judgment of God, especially as he had to do with the great and the powerful, who, as it is well known, will not easily, or with unruffled minds, bear their crimes to be exposed; for they wish to be privileged above the ordinary class of men. But the Prophet not only does not spare them, but he even arraigns them alone, as though the blame of all evils lodged only with them, as indeed the contagion had proceeded from them; for though all orders were then corrupt, yet the cause and the beginning of all the evils could not have been ascribed to any but to the chief men themselves.

And he says, *Princes for reward judge, priests teach for reward,*^{F51} *the prophets divine for money:* as though he had said, that the ecclesiastical as well as the civil government was subject to all kinds of corruptions, for all things were made matters of sale. We know that what the Holy Spirit declares elsewhere is ever true, — that by gifts or rewards the eyes of the wise are blinded and the hearts of the just are corrupted, (Ecclus. 20:29,) for as soon erg judges open a way for rewards, they cannot preserve integrity, however much they may wish to do so. And the same is the case with the priests: for if any one is given to avarice, he will adulterate the pure truth: it cannot be, that a complete liberty in teaching should exist, except when the pastor is exempt from all desire of gain. It is not therefore without reason that Micah complains here, that the princes as well as the priests were hirelings in his day; and by this he means, that no integrity remained among them, for the one, as I have said, follows from the other. He does not say, that the princes were either cruel or perfidious, though he had before mentioned these crimes; but in this place he simply calls them mercenaries. But, as I have just said, the one vice cannot be separated from the other; for every one who is hired will pervert judgment, whether he be a teacher or a judge. Nothing then remains pure where avarice bears rule. It was therefore quite sufficient for the Prophet to condemn the judges and the prophets and the priests for avarice; for it is easy hence to conclude, that teaching was exposed to sale, and that judgments were bought, so that he who offered most money easily gained his cause. *Princes* then *judge for reward*, and *priests* also *teach for reward*.

We can learn from this place the difference between prophets and priests. Micah ascribes here the office or the duty of teaching to the priests and leaves divination alone to the prophets. We have said elsewhere, that it happened through the idleness of the priests, that prophets were added to them; for prophesying belonged to them, until being content with the altar, they neglected the office of teaching: and the same thing, as we find, has taken place under the Papacy. For though it be quite evident for what reason pastors were appointed to preside over the Church, we yet see that all, who proudly call themselves pastors, are dumb dogs. Whence is this? Because they think that they discharge their duties, by being only attentive to ceremonies; and they have more than enough to occupy them: for the priestly office under the Papacy is laborious enough as to trifles and scenic performances: (*ritus histrionicos* — stage-playing rites) but at the same

time they neglect the principal thing — to feed the Lord’s flock with the doctrine of salvation. Thus degenerated had the priests become under the Law. What is said by Malachi ought to have been perpetuated, — that the law should be in the mouth of the priest, that he should be the messenger and interpreter of the God of hosts, (³⁹⁰²⁰⁷ Malachi 2:7;) but the priests cast from them this office: it became therefore necessary that prophets should be raised up, and as it were beyond the usual course of things while yet the regular course formally remained. But the priests taught in a cold manner; and the prophets divined, that is professed that oracles respecting future things were revealed to them.

This distinction is now observed by the Prophet, when he says, *The priests teach for reward*, that is, they were mercenaries, and hirelings in their office: and the *prophets divined for money*. It then follows, that they yet *leaned on Jehovah*, and said, *Is not Jehovah in the midst of us? Come then shall not evil upon us*. The Prophet shows here, as I have said at the beginning, that these profane men trifled with God: for though they knew that they were extremely wicked, nay, their crimes were openly known to all; yet they were not ashamed to lay claim to the authority of God. And it has, we know, been a common wickedness almost in all ages, and it greatly prevails at this day, — that men are satisfied with having only the outward evidences of being the people of God. There was then indeed an altar erected by the command of God; there were sacrifices made according to the rule of the Law; and there were also great and illustrious promises respecting that kingdom. Since then the sacrifices were daily performed, and since the kingdom still retained its outward form, they thought that God was, in a manner, bound to them. The same is the case at this day with the great part of men; they presumptuously and absurdly boast of the external forms of religion. The Papists possess the name of a Church, with which they are extremely inflated; and then there is a great show and pomp in their ceremonies. The hypocrites also among us boast of Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper, and the name of Reformation; while, at the same time, these are nothing but mockeries, by which the name of God and the whole of religion are profaned, when no real piety flourishes in the heart. This was the reason why Micah now expostulated with the prophets and the priests, and the king’s counselors; it was, because they falsely pretended that they were the people of God. ^{F52}

But by saying; that *they relied on Jehovah*, he did not condemn that confidence which really reposes on God; for, in this respect, we cannot exceed the bounds: as God's goodness is infinite, so we cannot trust in his word too much, if we embrace it in true faith. But the Prophet says, that hypocrites leaned on Jehovah, because they flattered themselves with that naked and empty distinction, that God had adopted them as his people. Hence the word, *leaning* or *recumbing*, is not to be applied to the real trust of the heart, but, on the contrary, to the presumption of men, who pretend the name of God, and so give way to their own will, that they shake off not only all fear of God, but also thought and reason. When, therefore, so great and so supine thoughtlessness occupies the minds of men, stupidity presently follows: and yet it is not without reason that Micah employs this expression, for hypocrites persuade themselves that all things will be well with them, as they think that they have God propitious to them. As then they feel no anxiety while they have the idea that God is altogether at peace with them, the Prophet declares, by way of irony, that they *relied on Jehovah*; as though he had said, that they made the name of God their support: but yet the Prophet speaks in words contrary to their obvious meaning, (*καταχρηστικῶς loquitur* — speaks catachrestically;) for it is certain that no one relies on Jehovah except he is humbled in himself. It is penitence that leads us to God; for it is when we are cast down that we recumb on him; but he who is inflated with self-confidence flies in the air, and has nothing solid in him. And our Prophet, as I have said, intended indirectly to condemn the false security in which hypocrites sleep, while they think it enough that the Lord had once testified that they would be his people; but the condition is by them disregarded.

He now recites their words, *Is not Jehovah in the midst of us? Come will not evil upon us*. This question is a proof of a haughty self-confidence; for they ask as of a thing indubitable, and it is an emphatic mode of speaking, by which they meant to say, that Jehovah was among them. He who simply affirms a thing, does not show so much pride as these hypocrites when they set forth this question, "Who shall deny that Jehovah dwells in the midst of us?" God had indeed chosen an habitation among them for himself; but a condition was interposed, and yet they wished that he should be, as it were, tied to the temple, though they considered not what God required from them. They hence declared that Jehovah was in the midst of them; nay, they treated with disdain any one who dared to say a

word to the contrary: nor is there a doubt but that they poured forth blasts of contempt on the Prophets. For whenever any one threatened what our Prophet immediately subjoins, such an answer as this was ever ready on their lips, — “What! will God then desert us and deny himself? Has he in vain commanded the temple to be built among us? Has he falsely promised that we should be a priestly kingdom? Dost thou not make God a covenant-breaker, by representing him as approving of the terrors of thy discourse? But he cannot deny himself:” We hence see why the Prophet had thus spoken; it was to show that hypocrites boasted so to speak of their proud confidence, because they thought that God could not be separated from them.

Now this passage teaches us how preposterous it is thus to abuse the name of God. There is indeed a reason why the Lord calls us to himself, for without him we are miserable; he also promises to be propitious to us, though, in many respects, we are guilty before him: he yet, at the same time, calls us to repentance. Whosoever, then, indulges himself and continues sunk in his vices, he is greatly deceived, if he applies to himself the promises of God; for, as it has been said, the one cannot be separated from the other. ^{F53} But when God is propitious to them, they rightly conclude, that all things will be well with them, for we know that the paternal favor of God is a fountain of all felicity. But in this there was a vicious reasoning, — that they promised to themselves the favor of God through a false imagination of the flesh, and not through his word. Thus we see that there is ever in hypocrisy some imitation of piety: but there is a sophistry (*paralogismus*) either in the principle itself or in the argument.

Now follows a threatening, *Therefore, on your account, Zion as a field shall be plowed, and Jerusalem a heap shall be, and the mount of the house as the high places of a forest.* We here see how intolerable to God hypocrites are; for it was no ordinary proof of a dreadful vengeance, that the Lord should expose to reproach the holy city, and mount Zion, and his own temple. This revenge, then, being so severe, shows that to God there is nothing less tolerable than that false confidence with which hypocrites swell, for it brings dishonor on God himself; for they could not boast that they were God’s people without aspersing him with many reproaches. What then is the meaning of this, “God is in the midst of us,” except that they thereby declared that they were the representatives (*vicarios*) of God, that the kingdom was sacred and also the priesthood? Since then they

boasted that they did not presumptuously claim either the priesthood or the regal power, but that they were divinely appointed, we hence see that their profanation of God's name was most shameful. It is then no wonder that God was so exceedingly displeased with them: and hence the Prophet says, *For you shall Zion as a field be plowed*; as though he said, "This is like something monstrous, that the temple should be subverted, that the holy mount and the whole city should be entirely demolished, and that nothing should remain but a horrible desolation, — who can believe all this? It shall however, take place, and it shall take place on your account; you will have to bear the blame of this so monstrous a change." For it was as though God had thrown heaven and earth into confusion; inasmuch as he himself was the founder of the temple; and we know with what high encomiums the place was honored. Since then the temple was built, as it were, by the hand of God, how could it be otherwise, but that, when destroyed, the waste and desolate place should be regarded as a memorable proof of vengeance? There is therefore no doubt but that Micah intended to mark out the atrocity of their guilt, when he says, *For you shall Zion as a field be plowed, Jerusalem shall become a heap of stones*; that is, it shall be so desolated, that no vestige of a city, well formed and regularly built, shall remain.

And the mount of the house, etc. He again mentions Zion, and not without reason: for the Jews thought that they were protected by the city Jerusalem; the whole country rested under its shadow, because it was the holy habitation of God. And again, the city itself depended on the temple, and it was supposed, that it was safe under this protection, and that it could hardly be demolished without overthrowing the throne of God himself: for as God dwelt between the cherubim, it was regarded by the people as a fortress incapable of being assailed. As then the holiness of the mount deceived them, it was necessary to repeat what was then almost incredible, at least difficult of being believed. He therefore adds, *The mount of the house shall be as the high places of a forest*; that is, trees shall grow there.

Why does he again declare what had been before expressed with sufficient clearness? Because it was not only a thing difficult to be believed, but also wholly inconsistent with reason, when what the Lord had said was considered, and that overlooked which hypocrites ever forget. God had indeed made a covenant with the people; but hypocrites wished to have

God, as it were, bound to them, and, at the same time, to remain themselves free, yea, to have a full liberty to lead a wicked life. Since then the Jews were fixed in this false opinion, — that God could not be disunited from his people, the Prophet confirms the same truth, that the mount of the house would be as the high places of a forest. And, by way of concession, he calls it the mount of the house, that is, of the temple; as though he said, “Though God had chosen to himself a habitation, in which to dwell, yet this favor shall not keep the temple from being deserted and laid waste; for it has been profaned by your wickedness.”

Let us now see at what time Micah delivered this prophecy. This we learn from ^{<242601>}Jeremiah 26; for when Jeremiah prophesied against the temple, he was immediately seized and cast into prison; a tumultuous council was held, and he was well nigh being brought forth unto execution. All the princes condemned him; and when now he had no hope of deliverance, he wished, not so much to plead his own cause, as to denounce a threatening on them, that they might know that they could effect no good by condemning an innocent man. “Micah, the Morasthite,” he said, “prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, and said thus, ‘Zion as a field shall be plowed, Jerusalem shall be a heap, and the mount of the house as the high placers of a forest.’” Did the king and the people, he said, consult together to kill him? Nay, but the king turned, and so God repented; that is, the Lord deferred his vengeance; for king Hezekiah humbly deprecated the punishment which had been denounced. We now then know with certainty the time.

But it was strange that under such a holy king so many and so shameful corruptions prevailed, for he no doubt tried all he could to exercise authority over the people, and by his own example taught the judges faithfully and uprightly to discharge their office; but he was not able, with all his efforts, to prevent the Priests, and the Judges, and the Prophets, from being mercenaries. We hence learn how sedulously pious magistrates ought to labor, lest the state of the Church should degenerate; for however vigilant they may be, they can yet hardly, even with the greatest care, keep things (as mankind are so full of vices) from becoming very soon worse. This is one thing. And now the circumstance of the time ought to be noticed for another purpose: Micah hesitated not to threaten with such a judgment the temple and the city, though he saw that the king was endued with singular virtues. He might have thought thus with himself, “King

Hezekiah labored strenuously in the execution of his high office: now if a reproof so sharp and so severe will reach his ears, he will either despond, or think me to be a man extremely rigid, or, it may be, he will become exasperated against sound doctrine.” The Prophet might have weighed these things in his mind; but, nevertheless, he followed his true course in teaching, and there is no doubt but that his severity pleased the king, for we know that he was oppressed with great cares and anxieties, because he could not, by all his striving, keep within proper bounds his counselors, the priests and the prophets. He therefore wished to have God’s servants as his helpers. And this is what pious magistrates always desire, that their toils may in some measure be alleviated by the aid of the ministers of the word; for when the ministers of the word only teach in a cold manner, and are not intent on reproofing vices, the severity of the magistrates will be hated by the people. “Why, see, the ministers say nothing, and we hence conclude that they do not perceive so great evils; and yet the magistrates with the drawn sword inflict new punishments daily.” When, therefore, teachers are thus silent, a greater odium no doubt is incurred by the magistrates: it is hence, as I have said, a desirable thing for them, that the free reproofs of teachers should be added to the punishments and judgments of the law.

We further see how calm and meek was the spirit of the king, that he could bear the great severity of the Prophet: *Behold*, he said, *on your accounts etc.*: “Thou oughtest at least to have excepted” me.” For the king was not himself guilty. Why then did he connect him with the rest? Because the whole body was infected with contagion, and he spoke generally; and the good king did not retort nor even murmur, but, as we have recited from Jeremiah, he humbly deprecated the wrath of God, as though a part of the guilt belonged to him. Now follows —

CHAPTER 4

<330401> MICAH 4:1-2

1. But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

1. Accidet ultimis diebus, ut sit mons domus Jehovae dispositus in capite montium, et extollentur ipse prae sublimitatibus; et venient ad eum populi:

2. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

2. Et proficiscentur gentes multae et dicent, Venite, et ascendemus ad montem Jehovae, et ad domum Dei Jacob; et docebit nos de viis suis, et ambulabimus in semitis ejus; quia ex Sion prodibit lex, et verbum Jehovae ex Jerusalem.

Here Micah begins his address to the faithful, who were a remnant among that people; for though the infection had nearly extended over the whole body, there were yet a few, we know, who sincerely worshipped God. Hence Micah, that he might not dishearten God's children by extreme terror, reasonably adds what we have now heard, — that though for a time the temple would be demolished and laid waste, it would yet be only for a season, for the Lord would be again mindful of his covenant. When, therefore, the Prophet had hitherto spoken of God's dreadful vengeance, he directed his discourse to the whole people and to the princess; but now, especially, and as it were apart, addresses the pious and sincere servants of God; as though he said, "There is now a reason why I should speak to the few: I have hitherto spoken of the near judgment of God on the king's counselors, the priests and the prophets; in short, on the whole community, because they are all become wicked and ungodly; a contempt of God and an irreclaimable obstinacy have pervaded the whole body. Let

them therefore have what they have deserved. But now I address the children of God by themselves, for I have something to say to them.”

For though the Prophet publicly proclaimed this promise, there is yet no doubt but that he had regard only to the children of God, for others were not capable of receiving this consolation; nay, he had shortly before condemned the extreme security of hypocrites, inasmuch as they leaned upon God; that is, relied on a false pretense of religion, in thinking that they were redeemed by a lawful price when they had offered their sacrifices. And we know that we meet with the same thing in the writings of the Prophets, and that it is a practice common among them to add consolations to threatening, not for the sake of the whole people, but to sustain the faithful in their hope, who would have despaired, had not a helping hand been stretched forth to them: for the faithful, we know, tremble, as soon as God manifests any token of wrath; for the more any one is touched with the fear of God, the more he dreads his judgment, and fears on account of his threatening. We hence see how necessary it is to moderate threatenings and terrors, when prophets and teachers have a regard to the children of God; for, as I have said, they are without these fearful enough. Let us then know that Micah has hitherto directed his discourse to the wicked despisers of God, who yet put on the cloak of religion; but now he turns his address to the true and pious worshipers of God. And he further so addresses the faithful of his age, that his doctrine especially belongs to us now; for how has it been, that the kingdom of God has been propagated through all parts of the earth? How has it been, that the truth of the gospel has come to us, and that we are made partakers with the ancient people of the same adoption, except that this prophecy has been fulfilled? Then the calling of the Gentiles, and consequently our salvation, is included in this prophecy.

But the Prophet says, *And it shall be in the extremity of days,*^{F54} *that the mount of the house of Jehovah shall be set in order*^{F55} *on the top of mountains.* The extremity of days the Prophet no doubt calls the coming of Christ, for then it was that the Church of God was built anew; in short, since it was Christ that introduced the renovation of the world, his advent is rightly called a new age; and hence it is also said to be the extremity of days: and this mode of expression very frequently occurs in Scripture; and we know that the time of the gospel is expressly called the last days and the last time by John, (<430218> John 2:18,) as well as by the author of the

Epistle to the Hebrews, (<580102> Hebrews 1:2,) and also by Paul, (<550301> 2 Timothy 3:1;) and this way of speaking they borrowed from the prophets. On this subject some remarks were made on Joel 2. Paul gives us the reason for this mode of speaking in <461011> 1 Corinthians 10:11: “Upon whom,” he says, “the ends of the world are come.” As Christ then brought in the completion of all things at his coming, the Prophet rightly says that it would be the last days when God would restore his Church by the hand of the Redeemer. At the same time, Micah no doubt intended to intimate that the time of God’s wrath would not be short, but designed to show that its course would be for a long time.

It shall then be in the last of days; that is, when the Lord shall have executed his vengeance by demolishing the temple, by destroying the city, and by reducing the holy place into a solitude, this dreadful devastation shall continue, not for one year, nor for two; in a word, it will not remain only for forty or fifty years, but the Lord will let loose the reins of his wrath, that their minds may long languish, and that no restoration may be evident. We now then understand the Prophet’s design as to the last days.

He calls the mount, *the mount of the house of Jehovah,* ^{F56} in a sense different from what he did before; for then it was, as we have stated by way of concession; and now he sets forth the reason why God did not wish wholly to cast aside that mount; for he commanded his temple to be built there. It is the same, then, as though he said, — “This ought not to be ascribed to the holiness of the mountain, as if it excelled other mountains in dignity; but because there the temple was founded, not by the authority of men, but by a celestial oracle, as it is sufficiently known.”

The mount then of the house of Jehovah shall be set in order on the top of the mountains, that is it shall surpass in height all other mountains; *and it shall be raised,* he says, *above the highest summits, and assemble* ^{F57} *there shall all nations.* It is certain, that by these words of the Prophet is to be understood no visible eminence of situation: for that mount was not increased at the coming of Christ; and they who lived in the time of the Prophet entertained no gross idea of this kind. But he speaks here of the eminence of dignity, — that God would give to mount Zion a distinction so eminent, that all other mountains would yield to its honor. And how was this done? The explanation follows in the next verse. Lest, then, any one thought that there would be some visible change in mount Zion, that it

would increase in size, the Prophet immediately explains what he meant and says, at the end of the verse, Come shall nations to God. It is now easy to see what its elevation was to be, — that God designed this mount to be, as it were, a royal seat. As under the monarchy of the king of Persia, the whole of the east, we know, was subject to one tower of the Persian; so also, when mount Zion became the seat of sovereign power, God designed to reign there, and there he designed that the whole world should be subject to him; and this is the reason and the Prophet said that it would be higher than all other mountains. Hence his meaning, in this expression, is sufficiently evident.

There follows, however, a fuller explanation, when he says, that *many nations would come*. He said only before that nations would come: but as David, even in his age, made some nations tributary to himself, the Prophet here expresses something more, — that *many nations would come*; as if he had said, “Though David subjugated some people to himself, yet the borders of his kingdom were narrow and confined, compared with the largeness of that kingdom which the Lord will establish at the coming of his Messiah: for not a few nations but many shall assemble to serve him, and shall say,” etc. The Prophet now shows that it would be a spiritual kingdom. When David subdued the Moabites and the Amorites, and others, he imposed a certain tribute to be paid annually but he was not able to establish among them the pure and legitimate worship of God, nor was he able to unite them in one faith. Then the Moabites and other nations, though they paid a tribute to David, did not yet worship the true God, but continued ever alienated from the Church. But our Prophet shows that the kingdom, which God would set up at the coming of the Messiah, would be spiritual.

For they shall say, ^{F58} *Let us you and ascend to the mount of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for, go forth shall a law from Zion, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem.* Throughout this passage the Prophet teaches us, that people are not to be constrained by an armed force, or by the power of the sword, to submit to David’s posterity, but that they are to be really and thoroughly reformed, so that they submit themselves to God, unite with the body of the Church, and become one people with the children of Abraham; for they will yield a voluntary service, and embracing the

teaching of the Law, they will renounce their own superstitions. This then is the Prophet's meaning. But the remainder we shall defer till to-morrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God that as thou hast been pleased to erect the throne of thy Son among us, we may rely on his protection and learn to resign ourselves wholly to thee, and never turn aside here and there, but with tulle obedience so submit ourselves to the King who has been appointed by thee, that he may own us as his legitimate people, and so glorify thy name, that we may not at the same time profane it by an ungodly and wicked life, but testify by our works that we are really thy subjects. and that thou attains full authority over us, so that thy name may be sanctified and thy Spirit may really guide us, until at length thy Son, who has gathered us when we were awfully gone astray, gather us again to that kingdom, which he as purchased for us by his own blood.
Amen.

LECTURE EIGHTY-EIGHTH

We began yesterday to explain the prophecy, in which Micah promises the restoration of the Church. We have said that this promise cannot be understood except of Christ's kingdom, for it refers to the last days. And it was also added, that the superiority and eminence of mount Zion, of which he speaks, cannot be otherwise understood than of God's spiritual kingdom; for the explanation follows, when he says, that many nations would come to be taught in the ways of the Lord. We hence see that an earthly empire is not what is here predicted, but what exists through the word and celestial doctrine. But each particular ought to be considered by us. We yesterday said, that in the distinct mention made of many nations, there is to be understood a contrast; for till that time God was only known by one people. Since God then had chosen the race of Abraham alone, there is here pointed out a future change, when he shall gather his Church from various nations, so as to do away with the difference between the Gentiles and the Jews.

It now follows, *They shall say, Come, and let us ascend to the mount of Jehovah.* The Prophet shows in these words that not only each one would be obedient to God, when called, but that they would also encourage one another: and this ardor is what is justly required in the faithful; they ought to animate and stir on one another; for it is not enough for each of us himself to obey God, but this zeal ought to be added, by which we may strive to produce a mutual benefit. This concern then is what the Prophet now refers to, when he says, "Come, that we may ascend to the mountain of the Lord." He might have said, that people would come, and there close his sentence; but he wished to join the two clauses, — that they, who had before despised the God of Israel, would come from all parts, — and also that they would become exhorters to one another. Come then that we may ascend. But the manner of the exhortation deserves to be noticed; for each one offers himself as a companion in the journey. We indeed see that many are prompt enough, when others are to be stimulated in their duty; but they at the same time lie still; their whole fervor is consumed in sending others, and they themselves move not, no, not a finger; so far are they from running with alacrity in company with others. The Prophet shows here, that the faithful will be so solicitous about the salvation of their

brethren that they will strenuously run themselves, and that they will prescribe nothing to others but what they themselves perform. Come then that we may ascend; they say not, “Go, ascend to the mount of Jehovah;” but, Let us go together.” It is then the right way of encouraging, when we really show that we require nothing from our brethren but what we desire to do ourselves.

The circumstance of time must now be noticed; for what the Prophet says respecting the nations coming into mount Zion, as it was to be reduced to a waste, might have appeared a fable; for what had he shortly before predicted? That Zion would be plowed as a field, and that trees would grow there, that it would become a wild forest. How then could it be, that many nations would flow to it as to a most renowned place, as it was to be reduced to a dreadful desolation? But the Prophet here extols the wonderful power of God, — that in this wild and desert place there would at length be raised a noble and a celebrated temple, where God would show mercy to his own people. Hence he promises what this mount of Jehovah would be, which was for a time to be forsaken; and that there would be, as formerly, a noble temple in the place, where desolation had for a season existed.

It afterwards follows, *And he will teach us of his way.*^{F59} Here the Prophet in a few words defines the legitimate worship of God: for it would not be sufficient for the nations to come together into one place to profess the one true God, unless true obedience followed, which rests on faith, as faith does on the word. It ought then to be especially noticed, that the Prophet sets here the word of God before us, in order to show that true religion is founded on the obedience of faith, and that God cannot be truly worshipped, except when he himself teaches his people, and prescribes to them what is necessary to be done. Hence when the will of God is revealed to us, we then can truly worship him. When the word is again taken away, there will indeed be some form of divine worship; but there will be no genuine religion, such as is pleasing to God. And hence we also learn, that there is no other way of raising up the Church of God than by the light of the word, in which God himself, by his own voice, points out the way of salvation. Until then the truth shines, men cannot be united together, so as to form a true Church.

Since it is so, it follows, that where the truth is either corrupted or despised, there is no religion, at least such as is approved by God. Men may indeed boast of the name with their lips: but there is no true religion before God, except it be formed according to the rule of his word. It hence also follows, that there is no Church, except it be obedient to the word of God, and be guided by it: for the prophet defines here what true religion is, and also how God collects a Church for himself. *He will then teach us of his ways.* And a third particular may be added, — that God is robbed of his right and of his honor, when mortals assume to themselves the authority to teach; for it is to God alone that this office of teaching his people can strictly be ascribed. (*proprie tribuitur.*) There were then priests and prophets, yet Micah here brings them down to their proper state, and shows that the right and the office of teaching would be in the power of the only true God. We hence see that God claims this office for himself, that we may not be tossed to and fro, and led astray by various teachers, but continue in simple obedience to his word, so that he alone may be the Supreme. In short, God is not the God and Head of the Church, except he be the chief and the only Teacher.

Wheat he now says, “He will teach us of his ways,” ought to be thus understood. He will teach us what his ways are; as though the Prophet had said, that the perfect wisdom of men is to understand what pleases God, and what is his will: for there is nothing farther to be learnt.

It follows, *And we will walk in his paths.* By this clause we are reminded, that the truth of God is not, as they say, speculative, but full of energizing power. God then not only speaks to the end that every one may acknowledge that to be true which proceeds from him, but at the same time he demands obedience. Hence we shall then only be the disciples of God, when we walk in his ways: for if we only nod with our ears, as asses are wont to do, and assent to what God says with our mouth and lips, it is extremely vain and absurd. It is therefore then only that men really profit under the teaching of God, when they form their life according to his doctrine, and be prepared with their feet to walk, and to follow whithersoever he may call them. *We will then walk in his paths.*

Micah had hitherto related only what the faithful would do; he now himself confirms the same truth, *For from Zion shall go forth a law,*^{F60} *and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem.* Here is a reason given why

many nations would come to the temple of the Lord; and that is, because a doctrine would be then promulgated, which had been before heard only in one place. We indeed know that the Jews came to the temple, not only to worship, but also to be instructed in the Law of God. The Law then had at that time, as it were, its habitation in Zion: there was the sanctuary of celestial wisdom. But what does our Prophet say? A law shall go forth from Zion, that is, it shall be proclaimed far and wide: the Lord will show, not only in one corner, what true religion is, and how he seeks to be worshipped, but he will send forth his voice to the extreme limits of the earth. *A law* then *shall go forth from Zion*, according to what is said in Psalm 110,

‘the scepter of thy power the Lord will send forth from Zion.’

In that passage the doctrine of Christ is metaphorically called a scepter, or is compared to a royal scepter; for Christ does not otherwise rule among us, than by the doctrine of his Gospel: and there David declares, that this scepter would be sent far abroad by God the Father, that Christ might have under his rule all those nations which had been previously aliens. Such is the meaning in this place, *A law from Zion shall go forth*. Then it follows, *The word of Jehovah from Jerusalem*. This is a repetition of the same sentiment, which is often the case. Then by **דוֹרָה**, *ture*, the Prophet means no other thing than doctrine: but, by another term, he confirms the same thing, that is that God would be heard not only at Jerusalem and in Judea, but that he would make his word to be proclaimed everywhere. It now follows —

<330403> **MICAH 4:3**

3. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

3. Et judicabit inter populos multos, et arguet (vel, corripiet) gentes robustos usque in longinquum, et concident gladios suos in vomeres, et lanceas suas in falces: non tollent gens contra gentem gladium, et non assuescent ultra praelio.

The Prophet here describes the fruit of Divine truth, — that God would restore all nations to such gentleness, that they would study to cultivate fraternal peace among themselves, and that all would consult the good of others, having laid aside every desire for doing harm. As then he has lately showed, that the Church of God could not be otherwise formed than by the Word, and that the legitimate worship of God cannot be set up and continued, except where God is honored with the obedience of faith; so now he shows that Divine truth produces this effect, — that they, who before lived in enmity towards one another and burned with the lust of doing harm, being full of cruelty and avarice, will now, having their disposition changed, devote themselves wholly to acts of kindness. But, before the Prophet comes to this subject, he says, —

He will judge^{F61} *among many people, and will reprove strong nations.* The word judge, in Hebrew, means the same as to rule or govern. It is certain that God is spoken of here: it is then the same as though the Prophet had said that though the nations had not hitherto obeyed God, they would now own him as king and submit to his government. God has indeed ever governed the world by his hidden providence, as he does still govern it: for how much soever the devil and the ungodly may rage; nay, how ever much they may boil with unbridled fury, there is no doubt but that God restrains and checks their madness by his hidden bridle. But the Scripture speaks of God's kingdom in two respects. God does indeed govern the devil and all the wicked, but not by his word, nor by the sanctifying power of his Spirit: it is so done, that they obey God, not willingly, but against their will. The peculiar government of God is that of his Church only, where, by his word and Spirit, He bends the hearts of men to obedience, so that they follow him voluntarily and willingly, being taught inwardly and outwardly, — inwardly by the influence of the Spirit, — outwardly by the preaching of the word. Hence it is said in Psalm 110, 'Thy willing people shall then assemble.' This is the government that is here described by the Prophet; God then *shall judge*; not as he judges the world, but he will, in a peculiar manner, make them obedient to himself so that they will look for nothing else than to be wholly devoted to him.

But as men must first be subdued before they render to God such obedience, the Prophet expressly adds, *And he will reprove (corripiet) or convince (arguet) many people.* And this sentence ought to be carefully noticed; for we hence learn, that such is our innate pride, that not one of us

can become a fit disciple to God, except we be by force subdued. Truth then would of itself freeze amidst such corruption as we have, except the Lord proved us guilty, except he prepared us beforehand, as it were, by violent measures. We now then perceive the design of the Prophet in connecting reproof with the government of God: for the verb יָכַח, *ikech*, signifies sometimes to expostulate, to convince, and sometimes to correct or reprove. ^{F62} In short, the wickedness and perversity of our flesh are here implied; for even the best of us would never offer themselves to God, without being first subdued, and that by God's powerful correction. This, then, is the beginning of the kingdom of Christ.

But when he says, that *strong nations* would be reproved, he hereby eulogizes and sets forth the character of the kingdom of which he speaks: and we hence learn the power of truth, — that strong men, when thus reproved, shall offer themselves, without any resistance, to be ruled by God. Correction is indeed necessary, but God employs no external force, nor any armed power, when he makes the Church subject to himself: and yet he collects strong nations. Hence then is seen the power of truth: for where there is strength, there is confidence and arrogance, and also rebellious opposition. Since then the Lord, without any other helps, thus corrects the perverseness of men, we hence see with what inconceivable power God works, when he gathers his own Church. It is to be added, that there is not the least doubt, but that this is to be applied to the person of Christ. Micah speaks of God, without mentioning Christ by name; for he was not yet manifested in the flesh: but we know that in his person has this been fulfilled, — that God has governed the universe, and subjected to himself the people of the whole world. We hence conclude that Christ is true God; for he is not only a minister to the Father, as Moses, or any one of the Prophets; but he is the supreme King of his Church.

Before I proceed to notice the fruit, the expression, רָחוֹק עַד, *od rechuk*, “afar off” must be observed. It may intimate a length of time as well as distance of place. Jonathan applies it to a long continuance of time, — that God would convince men to the end of the world. But the Prophet, I doubt not, intended to include the most distant countries; as though he had said, that God would not be the king of one people only, or of Judea alone, but that his kingdom would be propagated to the extremities of the earth. *He will then convince people afar off.*

He afterward adds, with respect to the fruit, *They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks*. I have already briefly explained the meaning of the Prophet: he in fact shows that when the nations should be taught by the word of God, there would be such a change, that every one would study to do good, and to perform the duties of love towards his neighbors. But by speaking of swords and spears he briefly intimates, what men, until they are made gentle by the word of the Lord, are ever intent on iniquitous tyranny and oppression; nor can it be otherwise, while every one follows his own nature; for there are none who are not wedded to their own advantages, and the cupidity of men is insatiable. As then all are thus intent on gain, while every one is blinded by self-love, what but cruelty must ever break forth from this wicked principle? Hence then it is, that men cannot cultivate peace with one another; for every one seeks to be the first, and draws every thing to himself; no one will willingly give way: then dissensions arise, and from dissensions, fightings. This is what the Prophet intimates. And then he adds, that the fruit of the doctrine of Christ would however be such, that men, who were before like cruel wild beasts, would become gentle and meek. *Forge then shall they their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks*.

Raise, he says, *shall not a nation a sword against a nation, and accustom themselves they shall no more to war*. He explains here more fully what I have before said, — that the Gospel of Christ would be to the nations, as it were, a standard of peace: as when a banner is raised up, soldiers engage in battle, and their fury is kindled; so Micah ascribes a directly opposite office to the Gospel of Christ, — that it will restore those to the cultivation of peace and concord, who before were given to acts of hostility. For when he says, ‘Raise a sword shall not a nation against nation,’ he intimates, as I have already stated, that wherever Christ does not reign, men are wolves to men, for every one is disposed to devour all others. Hence as men are naturally impelled by so blind an impulse, the Prophet declares, that this madness cannot be corrected, that men will not cease from wars, that they will not abstain from hostilities, until Christ becomes their teacher: for by the word לָמַד, *lamed*, he implies, that it is a practice which ever prevails among mankind, that they contend with one another, that they are ever prepared to do injuries and wrongs, except

when they put off their natural disposition. But gentleness, whence does it proceed? Even from the teaching of the Gospel.

This passage ought to be remembered; for we here learn, that there is not growing among us the real fruit of the Gospel, unless we exercise mutual love and benevolence, and exert ourselves in doing good. Though the Gospel is at this day purely preached among us, when yet we consider how little progress we make in brotherly love, we ought justly to be ashamed of our indolence. God proclaims daily that he is reconciled to us in his Son; Christ testifies, that he is our peace with God, that he renders him propitious to us, for this end, that we may live as brethren together. We indeed wish to be deemed the children of God, and we wish to enjoy the reconciliation obtained for us by the blood of Christ; but in the meantime we tear one another, we sharpen our teeth, our dispositions are cruel. If then we desire really to prove ourselves to be the disciples of Christ, we must attend to this part of divine truth, each of us must strive to do good to his neighbors. But this cannot be done without being opposed by our flesh; for we have a strong propensity to self-love, and are inclined to seek too much our own advantages. We must therefore put off these inordinate and sinful affections, that brotherly kindness may succeed in their place.

We are also reminded that it is not enough for any one to refrain from doing harm, unless he be also occupied in doing good to his brethren. The Prophet might indeed have said only They shall break their swords and their spears; so that they shall hereafter abstain from doing any hurt to others: this only is not what he says; but, "They shall forge," or beat," their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;" that is, when they shall abstain from all injuries they will seek to exercise themselves in the duties of love, consistently with what Paul says, when he exhorts those who had stolen to steal no more, but to work with their own hands, that they might relieve others (^{<490428>}Ephesians 4:28.) Except then we endeavor to relieve the necessities of our brethren, and to offer them assistance, there will not be in us but one part of true conversion, as the case is with many, who are not indeed inhuman, who commit no plunder, who give no occasion for complaint, but they live to themselves, and enjoy unprofitable leisure. This indolence the Prophet here indirectly condemns, when he speaks of the plowshares and the pruning hooks.

Again, a question may be here asked, — Was this fulfilled at the coming of Christ? It seems that the Prophet does not describe here the state of the Church for a time, but shows what would be the kingdom of Christ to the end. But we see, that when the Gospel was at first preached, the whole world boiled with wars more than ever; and now, though the Gospel in many parts is clearly preached, yet discords and contentions do not cease; we also see that rapacity, ambition, and insatiable avarice, greatly prevail; and hence arise contentions and bloody wars. And at the same time it would have been inconsistent in the Prophet to have thus spoken of the kingdom of Christ, had not God really designed to perform what is here predicted. My answer to this is, — that as the kingdom of Christ was only begun in the world, when God commanded the Gospel to be everywhere proclaimed, and as at this day its course is not as yet completed; so that which the Prophet says here has not hitherto taken place; but inasmuch as the number of the faithful is small, and the greater part despise and reject the Gospel, so it happens, that plunders and hostilities continue in the world. How so? Because the Prophet speaks here only of the disciples of Christ. He shows the fruit of his doctrine, that wherever it strikes a living root, it brings forth fruit: but the doctrine of the Gospel strikes roots hardly in one out of a hundred.^{F63} The measure also of its progress must be taken to the account; for so far as any one embraces the doctrine of the Gospel, so far he becomes gentle and seeks to do good to his neighbors. But as we as yet carry about us the relics of sin in our flesh, and as our knowledge of the Gospel is not yet perfect, it is no wonder, that not one of us has hitherto wholly laid aside the depraved and sinful affections of his flesh.

It is also easy hence to see, how foolish is the conceit of those, who seek to take away the use of the sword, on account of the Gospel. The Anabaptists, we know, have been turbulent, as though all civil order were inconsistent with the kingdom of Christ, as though the kingdom of Christ was made up of doctrine only, and that doctrine without any influence. We might indeed do without the sword, were we angels in this world; but the number of the godly, as I have already said, is small; it is therefore necessary that the rest of the people should be restrained by a strong bridle; for the children of God are found mixed together, either with cruel monsters or with wolves and rapacious men. Some are indeed openly

rebellious, others are hypocrites. The use of the sword will therefore continue to the end of the world.

We must now understand that at the time our Prophet delivered this discourse, Isaiah had used the very same words, (<230204>Isaiah 2:4:) and it is probable that Micah was a disciple of Isaiah. They, however, exercised at the same time the Prophetic office, though Isaiah was the oldest. But Micah was not ashamed to follow Isaiah and to borrow his words; for he was not given to self ostentation, as though he would not adduce any thing but what was his own; but he designedly adopted the expressions of Isaiah, and related verbally what he had said, to show that there was a perfect agreement between him and that illustrious minister of God, that his doctrine might obtain more credit. We hence see how great was the simplicity of our Prophet, and that he did not regard what malevolent and perverse men might say: “What! he only repeats the words of another.” Such a calumny he wholly disregarded; and he thought it enough to show that he faithfully declared what God had commanded. Though we have not the עַד רַחֵם, *od rechuk*, in Isaiah, yet the meaning is the same: in all other things they agree. It now follows—

<330404> **MICAH 4:4**

4. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.

4. Et sedebunt (hoc est, quiescent, vel, quieti habitabunt) quisque sub vite sua et sub ficu sua; et nemo erit qui exterreat; quia os Jehovae exercituum loquutum est.

Micah goes on here with the same subject, — that when the minds of men shall be disposed to acts of kindness, every one shall enjoy God’s blessing without being disturbed. There seems indeed to be two things here included, — that acts of hostility shall cease, — and that real happiness cannot exist among men, except Christ rules among them by the doctrine of his Gospel. And the same thing the prophets teach elsewhere, that is, that every one shall live without fear; and this they do, in order to show that men ever live in a miserable dread, except when they are safe under the protection of God. It is the same thing as though the Prophet had said, that

the life of men is most miserable, where the doctrine of the Gospel is not had, inasmuch as when they are disturbed by continual disquietude, every one fears for himself, every one suffers constant terrors. There is nothing more miserable than such a state of things, for peace is the chief good.

We now then understand the meaning of the Prophet to be, — that under the reign of Christ the faithful shall enjoy true and full happiness, as they shall be exempt from trembling and fear; hence he names the vine and the fig-tree. He might have said, “Every one shall live securely at home;” but he says, *Every one shall rest under his own fig-tree and under his own vine*; that is, though exposed to thieves, he shall yet fear no violence, no injury; for those who were thieves shall observe what is just and right; those who were bloody shall study to do good. Hence when no one closes the door of his house, yea, when he goes out into the fields and sleeps in the open air; he will still be safe and secure. We now then see why the Prophet mentions here the fig-tree and the vine, rather than the dwelling-house.

And there will be no one to terrify them. What the Prophet designed to express is here more clearly specified, — that there would be no danger, and that there would therefore be no need of hiding-places or of any defenses. Why? Because the very fields, he says, will be free from every thing that may hurt, as there will be none to cause fear. And the Prophet seems to allude to the blessing promised in the Law, for Moses used nearly the very same words: and the Prophets, we know, drew many things from the Law; for their design was to retain the people in its doctrine, and to render it as familiar as possible to them. As then Moses promised, among other things, this security,

‘Ye shall sleep, and none shall terrify you,’ (^{<032606>}Leviticus 26:6;)

so the Prophet also, in speaking here of the kingdom of Christ, shows that this blessing would be then fully accomplished.

He now at last subjoins, *The mouth of Jehovah hath thus spoken*, that he might confirm what seemed incredible: for, as I have already said, since he had shortly before predicted the devastation of mount Zion and the ruin of the temple, it seemed very improbable that the nations would come there to worship God. But he declares that the mouth of God had thus spoken, that the faithful might overcome all obstacles and struggle against despair;

though they saw the temple destroyed, the mount Zion desolated, though they saw a horrible waste and wild beasts occupying the place of men; they were yet to continue to entertain firm hope. — How so? Because Jehovah has made a promise and he will fulfill it: for when mention is made of God's mouth, his omnipotence is to be understood by which will be executed whatever he has promised.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that since, at the coming of Christ thy Son, thou didst really perform what thy servants, the Prophets, had previously so much foretold, and since thou daily invites us to the unity of faith, that with united efforts we may truly serve thee, — O grant, that we may not continue torn asunder, every one pursuing his own perverse inclinations, at a time when Christ is gathering us to thee; nor let us only profess with the mouth and in words, that we are under thy government, but prove that we thus feel in real sincerity and may we then add to the true and lawful worship of thy name brotherly love towards one another, that with united efforts we may promote each other's good, and that our adoption may thus be proved and be more and more confirmed, that we may ever be able with full confidence to call on thee as our Father through Christ our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE EIGHTY-NINTH

<330405> MICAH 4:5

5. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.

5. Quia omnes populi ambulabunt, quisque in nomine dei sui; nos autem ambulabimus in nomine Jehovae Dei nostri in seculum et usque.

Micah, after having spoken of the restoration of the Church, now confirms the same truth, and shows that the faithful would have reason enough to cleave constantly to their God, and to despise all the superstitions of the world, and that though they may be tossed here and there by contrary opinions, they will yet continue in true religion. This verse then is connected with the kingdom of Christ; for until we are gathered, and Christ shines among us and rules us by his word, there can be in us no constancy, no firmness. But when under the auspices of Christ, we join together in one body the Church, such then becomes the constancy of our faith, that nothing can turn us from the right course, though new storms were at any time to arise, by which the whole world might be shaken, and though it were to happen that the universe should be agitated or pass away. We now understand what the Prophet means.

He therefore says, *All nations shall walk every one in the name of his god.* This sentence must be thus explained, — “Though nations be divided into various sects, and each be addicted to their own superstitions, yet we shall continue firm in the pure worship of God and in unity of faith.” But this question occurs, how could the Prophet say that there would be such discords in the world, when he had shortly before spoken of the Church being gathered and united together? for he had said, Come shall all nations, and each will say, Come, let us ascend into the mount of Jehovah. There seems to be here some sort of inconsistency, — that all nations would come to mount Zion, and yet that every people would have their own gods. But the solution is not difficult: the Prophet in this verse strengthens the faithful, until Christ should be revealed to the world: nor is there any doubt but the Prophet intended to sustain the confidence of the godly,

who might have otherwise been overwhelmed a hundred times with despair. When the children of Israel were driven into exile, when their inheritance was taken away from them, when the temple had been demolished, when, in a word, no visible religion existed, they might, as I have said, have desponded, had not this promise come to their minds, — that God would restore mount Zion, and gather a Church from the whole world. But there was also need of some confirmation, and this is what the Prophet now subjoins. Hence he says, “Since the Lord gives you hope of so glorious a restoration, you ought to feel confidence. and, in reliance on his promise, to continue in his true worship, how much soever the Gentiles may serve their own idols, and boast that they have the true God. However, then, every one of the nations may take pride in their superstitions, you ought not to fluctuate, nor turn here and there, like reeds, which are tossed to and fro, as the wind changes; but ye shall continue firm and steady in your course; for ye know that God is true, who has once for all adopted you, and has promised that your salvation will be the object of his care, even when the world shall think you to be ruined and lost.”

We hence see that what the Prophet had in view was to raise up into confidence the minds of the godly in the midst not only of troubles, but of utter confusion. *All nations* then *shall walk*, that is, when the temple and the city shall be demolished, and the people be led into distant exile, the ungodly will, at the same time, triumph, every one will extol his own gods: though our God should not then appear, there will yet be no reason why we should be discouraged; but we ought to recomb on his word. *We shall then walk in the name of our God, and that for ever and ever*; that is, though it should happen that the world should a hundred times be turned and turned over again, there shall yet be no change in our minds: for as the truth of God is eternal, so also our faith ought to be constant and never to vary. Now the difficulty is removed, and we see how these two things agree, — that all nations shall come and with one consent worship God, and yet that to each of them there would be their own gods: for the diversity of time must be here regarded, when all nations would walk every one in the name of his god.^{F64}

By saying, *אִישׁ בְּשֵׁם אֱלֹהָיו*, *aish beshem Aleiu*, he touches, in an indirect way, on that variety which exists among men. Though all of them pertinaciously follow and defend their own superstitions yet each one

fabricates a goal for himself. Thus it happens, that nothing is certain, for they follow only their own inventions. But this the Prophet meant only to touch by the way. His main object was that which I have stated, — that though the Church of God would be small, and should find a great multitude opposed to it, it ought not yet to succumb. We know how violent a thing is public consent; for when the majority conspire together, the small number, who entertain a different opinion, are, as it were instantly swallowed up. It is not then without reason that the Prophet exhorts the faithful here to an invincible firmness of mind, that they might triumph over all the nations. However small, then, might be the faithful in number, the Prophet wished them to look down, as it were from a higher place, not only on a large multitudes but on all mankind. Though then *all nations walk, etc.*: nor is the word כָּל, *cal*, all, superfluous, — though *all nations shall walk, etc.* There was then but one nation, the offspring of Abraham, among whom true religion existed; and it was a dreadful devastation, when God suffered the royal city and the temple to be pulled down, and the whole body of the people to be torn asunder, to be driven away here and there, so that no kingdom and no kind of civil community remained. Hence the Prophet intimates here, that though the faithful should find that in number and dignity they were far surpassed by their enemies, they yet should not despair. “Though then all the nations walked, every one in the name of their god, — though every people set up their superstitions against you, and all conspired against you together, yet stand ye firm and proceed in your course, and this not for a short time, but for ever and ever.”^{F65} Now this passage shows that faith depends not on the suffrages of men, and that we ought not to regard what any one may think, or what may be the consent of all; for the truth of God alone ought to be deemed sufficient by us. How much soever, then, the whole world may oppose God, our faith ought not to be changeable, but remain firm on this strong foundation, — that God, who cannot deceive, has spoken. This is one thing. Then, in the second place, it must be added, that this firmness ought to be perpetual. Though then Satan may excite against us new troubles, since we have hitherto stood firm as to our faith in God’s word, let us proceed in the same course to the end. And the Prophet designedly added this verse; because he saw that the people would be subject to various and long-continued temptations. It was a long captivity: hence languor might have, as it were, wasted away all the confidence which the people then had. And further, after they returned from exile, we know how

often and how grievously their faith was tried, when all their neighbors inimically assailed them, and when they were afterwards oppressed by cruel tyranny. This was the reason why the Prophet said that the children of God are to *walk perpetually and to the end in his name.*

Though he gives the name of gods to the idols of the nations he yet shows that there is a great and striking difference; for the nations worship their own gods, which they had invented: or how did they derive their majesty and their power, except from the false imagination of men? But the Prophet says, *We will walk in the name of Jehovah our God.* He hence shows that the power and authority of God is not founded on any vain device of men, for he of himself exists, and will exist, though he were denied by the whole world. And this also confirms what I have already stated, — that the faithful ought thus to embrace the word of God, as they know that they have not to do with men, the credit of whom is doubtful and inconstant, but with him who is the true God, who cannot lie, and whose truth is immutable. Let us proceed —

<330406> MICAH 4:6-7	
6. In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted;	6. In die illa, inquit Jehova, colligam claudam, et ejectam congregabo, et quam malis afflixi;
7. And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.	7. Et ponam claudam in reliquias, et ultra ejectam in gentem robustam; regnabit Jehova super eos in monte Sion ex nunc usque in seculum.

The Prophet pursues the same subject. But we must ever remember what I have previously reminded you of, — that the trials would be so grievous and violent that there would be need of strong and uncommon remedies; for the faithful might have been a hundred times sunk, as it were, in the deepest gulfs, except they had been supported by various means. This then is the reason why the Prophet confirms so fully the truth which we have noticed respecting the restoration of the Church.

In that day, he says, *I will gather the halting*. This metaphor is not only found here; for David sage that his own affliction was like that of halting. The word צלעה, *tsaloe*, means the side: hence they metaphorically call those halters who walk only on one side: it is the same as though he had said, that they were maimed or weak.^{F66} He then adds, *I will assemble the ejected, whom I have afflicted*. In the next verse he repeats the same, I will make the halting, he says, a remnant; that is, I will make her who is now halting to remain alive, and her who is cast afar off, *a strong nation*. Some explain אנאלה, ^{F67} *enelae*, in a more refined manner, and say that it means, She who is gone before; as though the Prophet said, God will sustain the halting, and to those who are lively he will add strength. But this exposition is too strained. We see that the context will not admit it; for the Prophet brings forward the Church here as afflicted by the hand of God, and nigh utter ruin: and then, on the other hand, he intimates, that it was to be restored by God's power, and that it would thereby gather new strength, and flourish as before: he therefore calls the Church as one cast far away, as in the previous verse; and the other verse clearly shows, that the Prophet's design was no other but to point out the twofold state of the Church.

Now, in the first place, we must observe, that the Prophet meets the trial then present, which must have otherwise depressed the hearts of the godly. He saw that they were in a manner broken down; and then their dispersion was as it were a symbol of final ruin. If then the faithful had their minds continually fixed on that spectacle, they might have a hundred times despaired. The Prophet therefore comes here seasonably to their help, and reminds them, that though they were now halting, there was yet in God new vigor; that though they were scattered, it was yet in God's power to gather those who had been driven afar off. The meaning briefly is, that though the Church differed nothing for a time from a dead man, or at least from one that is maimed, no despair ought to be entertained; for the Lord sometimes raises up his people, as though he raised the dead from the grave: and this fact ought to be carefully noticed, for as soon as the Church of God does not shine forth, we think that it is wholly extinct and destroyed. But the Church is so preserved in the world, that it sometimes rises again from death: in short, the preservation of the Church, almost every day, is accompanied with many miracles.

But we ought to bear in mind, that the life of the Church is not without a resurrection, nay, it is not without many resurrections, if the expression be allowed. This we learn from the words of the Prophet, when he says, ‘I will then gather the halting, and assemble the driven away;’ and then he adds, ‘and her whom I have with evils afflicted.’ And this has been expressly said, that the faithful may know, that God can bring out of the grave those whom he has delivered to death. For if the Jews had been destroyed at the pleasure of their enemies, they could not have hoped for so certain a remedy from God: but when they acknowledged that nothing happened to them except through the just judgment of God, they could entertain hope of restoration. How so? Because it is what is peculiar to God to bring forth the dead, as I have already said, from the grave; as it is also his work to kill. We then see that what the Prophet promised, respecting the restoration of the Church, is confirmed by this verse: I am he, says God, who has afflicted; cannot I again restore you to life? For as your death is in my hand, so also is your salvation. If the Assyrians or the Chaldeans had gained the victory over you against my will, there would be some difficulty in my purpose of gathering you; but as nothing has happened but by my command, and as I have proved that your salvation and your destruction is in my power, there is no reason for you to think that it is difficult for me to gather you, who have through my judgment been dispersed.

He then adds, *I will make the halting a remnant*. By remnant he understands the surviving Church. Hence the metaphor, halting, is extended even to destruction; as though he said, “Though the Jews for a time may differ nothing from dead men, I will yet cause them to rise again, that they may become again a new people.” It was difficult to believe this at the time of exile: no wonder, then, that the Prophet here promises that a posterity would be born from a people that were dead. For though Babylon was to them like the grave, yet God was able to do such a thing as to bring them forth as new men, as it really happened.

He afterwards subjoins *And the driven afar off, a strong nation*. When the Jews were scattered here and there, how was it possible that God should from this miserable devastation form for himself a new people, and also a strong people? But the Prophet has put the contrary clauses in opposition to one another, that the Jews, amazed at their own evils, and astonished, might not cast away every consolation. As then he had dispersed them, he

would again gather them, and would not only do this, but also make them a strong nation.

He then adds, *Reign shall Jehovah over them on mount Zion, henceforth and for ever*. The Prophet no doubt promises here the new restoration of that kingdom which God himself had erected; for the salvation of the people was grounded on this — that the posterity of David should reign, as we shall hereafter see. And it is a common and usual thing with the prophets to set forth the kingdom of David, whenever they speak of the salvation of the Church. It was necessary then that the kingdom of David should be again established, in order that the Church might flourish and be secure. But Micah does not here name the posterity of David, but mentions Jehovah himself, not to exclude the kingdom of David, but to show that God would become openly the founder of that kingdom, yea, that he himself possessed the whole power. For though God governed the ancient people by the hand of David, by the hand of Josiah and of Hezekiah, there was yet, as it were, a shade intervening, so that God reigned not then visibly. The Prophet then mentions here some difference between that shadowy kingdom and the latter new kingdom, which, at the coming of the Messiah, God would openly set up. *Jehovah himself shall then reign over them*; as though he said, “Hitherto indeed, when the posterity of David held the government, as God himself created both David and his sons, and as they were anointed by his authority and command, it could not have been thought but that the kingdom was his, though he governed his people by the ministry and agency of men: but now God himself will ascend the throne in a conspicuous manner, so that no one may doubt but that he is the king of his people.” And this was really and actually fulfilled in the person of Christ. Though Christ was indeed the true seed of David, he was yet at the same time Jehovah, even God manifested in the flesh. We hence see, that the Prophet here in lofty terms extols the glory of Christ’s kingdom; as though he had said that it would not be a shadowy kingdom as it was under the Law. *Jehovah then shall reign over you*.

He then subjoins, *on mount Zion*. We know that the seat of the kingdom of Christ has not been continued on mount Zion; but this verse must be connected with the beginning of this chapter. The Prophet has previously said, From Zion shall go forth a law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. If then the interpretation of this place be asked, that is, how

Jehovah showed himself the king of his people, and erected his throne on mount Zion, the answer is, that from thence the law went forth from that place, as from a fountain flowed the doctrine of salvation, to replenish the whole world. As then the Gospel, which God caused to be promulgated through the whole world, had its beginning on mount Zion, so the Prophet says that God would reign there. But we must at the same time observe, that through the defection and perfidy of the people it has happened that mount Zion is now only an insignificant corner of the earth, and not the most eminent in the world, as also the city Jerusalem, according to the prediction of Zechariah. Mount Zion then is now different from what it was formerly; for wherever the doctrine of the Gospel is preached, there is God really worshipped, there sacrifices are offered; in a word, there the spiritual temple exists. But yet the commencement of the Gospel must be taken to the account, if we would understand the real meaning of the Prophet, that is, that Christ, or God in the person of Christ, began to reign on mount Zion, when the doctrine of the Gospel from thence went forth to the extremities of the world. It now follows —

<330408> MICAH 4:8

8. And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

8. Et tu turris gregis, arx filiae Sion, ad te veniet; perveniet principatus primus, regnum filiae Jerusalem.

Micah still continues the same subject, — that the miserable calamities of the people, or even their ruin, will not prevent God to restore again his Church. *Thou tower of the flock*, he says, *the fortress of the daughter of Zion*, doubt not but that God will again restore to thee thy ancient kingdom and dignity from which thou seemest now to have entirely fallen. But interpreters take the tower of the flock in various senses. Some think that the devastation of the city Jerusalem is pointed out, because it became like a cottage, as it is said in Isaiah; and עִפְלָה, *ophel*, they render “obscure,” for its root is to cover. But another explanation is simpler, — that the holy city is called the tower of the flock, because God had chosen it for himself, to gather his people thence; for we know that they had there their holy assemblies. *Thou*, then, *the tower of the flock*, and then, *the fortress of the*

daughter of Zion, to thee shall come the former kingdom. ^{F68} If, however, the former sense be more approved, I will not contend; that is, that Jerusalem is here called the tower of the flock on account of its devastation, as it was reduced as it were into a cottage. As to the main import of the passage, there is no ambiguity; for the Prophet here strengthens the minds of the godly: they were not to regard the length of time, nor to allow their thoughts, to be occupied with their present calamity, but to feel assured, that what God had promised was in his power, that he could, as it were, raise the dead, and thus restore the kingdom of David, which had been destroyed.

Do then, he says, firmly hope. — Why? because *come to thee, come to thee shall the former kingdom.* ^{F69} Here the breaking off of the sentence is to be noticed, when the Prophet speaks of the ancient kingdom and dignity. It is not indeed to be doubted, but that the people of God had become objects of mockery, and that hypocrites and heathens thought that what David had testified respecting the perpetuity of his kingdom was a mere delusion.

‘Behold thy kingdom,’ he said, ‘shall continue as long as the sun
and the moon,’ (Psalm 72)

but soon after the death of Solomon, a small portion only was reserved for his posterity, and at length the kingdom itself and its dignity disappeared. This is the reason that the Prophet now says, that the former kingdom would come. *Come*, he says, *to thee, daughter of Zion, come shall the former kingdom.* There is indeed no doubt, but that by the former kingdom he understands its most flourishing condition, recorded in Scripture, under David and Solomon.

The kingdom, he says, *to the daughter of Jerusalem shall come.* He expressly mentions the daughter of Jerusalem, because the kingdom of Israel had obscured the glory of the true kingdom. Hence the Prophet testifies here that God was not unmindful of his promise, and that he would restore to Jerusalem the dignity which it had lost, and unite the whole people into one body, that they might be no more divided, but that one king would rule over the whole race of Abraham. But this was not fulfilled, we are certain, at the coming of Christ, in a manner visible to men: we must therefore bear in mind what Micah has previously taught, — that this kingdom is spiritual; for he did not ascribe to Christ a golden scepter,

but a doctrine, “Come, and let us ascend unto the mount of Jehovah, and he will teach us of his ways; and then he added,” From Zion shall go forth a law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. This, then, ought ever to be remembered, — that God has not rendered Jerusalem glorious in the sight of men, as it was formerly, nor has he enriched it with influence and wealth and earthly power; but he has yet restored the sovereign authority; for he has not only subjected to himself the ten tribes which had formerly revolted, but also the whole world. Let us go on —

<330409> MICAH 4:9-10	
<p>9. Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy counselor perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail.</p>	<p>9. Nunc quare vociferaris vociferatione? Rex nullus in te? Au conciliarius tuus perit? Quia te occupavit dolor quasi parturientem.</p>
<p>10. Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.</p>	<p>10. Dole et ignemisce, filia Sion, quasi parturiens; quia ^{F70} exibis e civitate, et habitabis in ergo; et venies Babylonem usque; illic liberaberis, illic dedimet te Jehova e manu hostium tuorum.</p>

The Prophet blends here things in their nature wholly contrary, — that the Jews were for a time to be cut off, — and that afterwards they were to recover their former state. Why, he says, *dost thou cry out with crying?* We must notice the Prophet’s design. He did not intend to overturn what he had before stated; but as the minds of the godly might have fainted amidst so many changes, the Prophet here gives them support, that they might continue firm in their faith; and hence he says, *Why dost thou cry aloud with loud crying?* That is, “I see that grievous troubles will arise capable of shaking even the stoutest hearts: time will be changeable; it will often be, that the faithful will be disturbed and degraded; but though various tumults may arise, and tempests throw all things into confusion, yet God will redeem his people.” We now then see what the Prophet means by saying, Why dost thou now cry? Why dost thou make an uproar? for the verb

here properly means, not only to cry out, but also to sound the trumpet; as though he said, Why do the Jews so much torment themselves? There is he says, no doubt, a good reason.

And he adds, *Is there no king among thee?* This was doubtless the reason why the Jews so much harassed themselves; it was, because God had deprived them of their kingdom and of counsel: and we know what Jeremiah has said, ‘Christ,’ that is, the anointed of the Lord, ‘by whose life we breathe, is slain,’ (<250420>Lamentations 4:20.) Since, then, the whole Church derived as it were its life from the safety of its king, the faithful could not be otherwise than filled with amazement when the kingdom was upset and abolished; for the hope of salvation was taken away. *Is there, then, not a king among thee? and have thy counselors perished?* Some think that the unfaithfulness of the people is here indirectly reproved, because they thought themselves to be destitute of the help of God and of his Christ, as though he said, — “Have ye forgotten what God has promised to you, that he would be your king for ever, and would send the Messiah to rule over you? nay, has he not promised that the kingdom of David would be perpetual? Whence then, is this fear and trembling, as though God no longer reigned in the midst of you, and the throne of David were hopelessly overturned?” These interpreters, in confirmation of this opinion, say, that Christ is here distinguished by the same title as in <230907>Isaiah 9:7; where he is called יֵעוֹץ, *ivots*, a counselor. But as in this verse, it is the Prophet’s design to terrify, and to reprove rather than to alleviate the grievousness of evils by consolation; it is more probable, that their own destitution is set before the people; as though Micah said, “What cause have you for trembling? Is it because your king and all his counselors have been taken away?” But what immediately follows proves that this sorrow arose from a just cause; it was because they were stripped of all those things which had been till that time the evidences of God’s favor.

Why then *has pain laid hold on thee as on one in travail? Be in pain*, he says, *and groan;*^{F71} that is, I will not prevent thee to grieve and to mourn; as though he said, “Certainly even the strongest cannot look on calamities so dreadful, without suffering the heaviest sorrow; but though God may for a time subject his children to the greatest tortures, and expose them to the most grievous evils, he will yet restore them at length from their exile.” *Thou shalt depart, he says, from the city, and dwell in the field: thou shalt*

come even to Babylon; but there thou shalt be delivered; there shall Jehovah redeem thee from the hand of thy enemies. The import of the whole is, that though God would have a care for his people, as he had promised, there was yet no cause for the faithful to flatter themselves, as though they were to be exempt from troubles; but the Prophet, on the contrary, exhorts them to prepare themselves to undergo calamities, as they were not only to be ejected from their country, and to wander in strange lands like vagrants, but were to be led away into Babylon as to their grave.

But to strengthen the minds of the faithful to bear the cross, he gives them a hope of deliverance, and says, that God would *there deliver* them, and *there redeem* them from the hand of their enemies. He repeats the adverb, **□W**, *shem*, there, twice, and not without cause: for the faithful might have excluded every hope of deliverance, as though the gate of God's power had been closed. And this is the reason why the Prophet repeats twice, *there, there*; even from the grave he will deliver and redeem thee: "Extend then your hope, not only to a small measure of favor, as though God could deliver you only from a state of some small danger, but even to death itself. Though then ye lay, as it were, in your graves, yet doubt not but that God will stretch forth his hand to you, for he will be your deliverer. God then in whose power is victory, can overcome many and innumerable deaths."

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that since under the guidance of thy Son we have been united together in the body of thy Church, which has been so often scattered and torn asunder, — O grant, that we may continue in the unity of faith, and perseveringly fight against all the temptations of this world, and never deviate from the right course, whatever new troubles may daily arise: and though we are exposed to many deaths, let us not yet be seized with fear, such as may extinguish in our hearts every hope; but may we, on the contrary, learn to raise up our eyes and minds, and all our thoughts, to thy great power, by which thou quickenest the dead, and raises from nothing things which are not, so that though we may be daily exposed to ruin, our souls may ever aspire to eternal salvation, until thou at length really slowest thyself to be the fountain of life,

when we shall enjoy that endless felicity, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE NINETIETH

<330411> MICAH 4:11-13	
<p>11. Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.</p>	<p>11. Et nunc congregatae sunt contra se gentes multae (vel, robustae,) dicentes Damnata erit; et aspiciet in Sion oculus noster.</p>
<p>12. But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.</p>	<p>12. Ipsi vero non noverunt cogitationes Jehovae, et non intellexerunt consilium ejus; quia congregabis eos quasi manipulum in aeream.</p>
<p>13. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.</p>	<p>13. Surge, et tritura filia Sion; quia cornu tuum ponam ferrum, et ungulas tuas ponam chalybem; et conteres populos robustos; et dicabis Jehovae opes ipsorum, et substantiam eorum Dominatori universae terrae.</p>

The Prophet's object here is to give some alleviation to the faithful lest they should succumb under their calamities; for, as we have stated, there were most grievous evils approaching, sufficient to overwhelm the minds of the godly. The Prophet then raises up here, with the most suitable comfort, those who would have otherwise fainted under their calamities; and the sum of the whole is this, — that the faithful were not to be confounded on finding the ungodly proudly triumphing, as they are wont to do, when they seem to have gained their wishes. Since, then, the wicked show a petulant spirit beyond all bounds, the Prophet exhorts the faithful to sustain themselves by God's promises, and not to care for such insolence. He then subjoins a promise, — that God would assemble all the forces of their enemies, as when one gathers many ears of corn into a bundle, that he may thrash them on the floor. I will come now to the words of the Prophet.

Assemble, he says, *against thee do nations*, or strong nations: for, by saying, גוֹיִם רַבִּים, *guim rebim*, he intimates one of two things, either that they were strong, or that they were large in number: as to the subject there is no great difference. The Prophet had this in view, — that though the Church of God may be pressed by a great multitude of enemies, it yet ought not to be broken down in mind: for the ungodly, while they cruelly domineer, do not understand the design of God. *Assemble*, then, *against thee do many nations*. He sets the thing before them, to heal them of terror: for when we are beyond the reach of harm, we, for the most part, too heedlessly despise all dangers; and then, when we come to a real struggle, we tremble, or even fall and become wholly weak. This is the reason why the Prophet sets before the Jews their prospects, and shows that the time was near when they were to endure a siege, as enemies would, on all sides, surround them. *Assemble then do nations, and strong or many nations*: he shows here that the Jews had no reason to despond, though their enemies would far exceed them in number, and in forces, and in courage, for it was enough for them to be under the protection of God.

Who say, condemned now shall be Zion.^{F72} The verb חָנַף, *chenaph*, means to act wickedly and perversely. It may then be literally rendered, ‘profane (scelerata) shall be Zion; and on it shall our eye look:’ but this word is often taken metaphorically for condemnation. The meaning then is, ‘Zion is now condemned:’ and the Prophet, no doubt, intended to intimate here, that the enemies would so triumph, as though Zion were not under the guardianship of God; as when any one, who has rendered himself hateful by his vices, is left and forsaken by his patrons. So, then, the Prophet here arms the faithful against the arrogance of their enemies, that they might not despair, when they found that they were condemned by the consent of all men, and that this was the opinion of all, — that they were forsaken by God.

Consolation follows, *But they know not the thoughts of Jehovah, nor understand his counsel*: for verbs in the past tense have the meaning of the present. Here the Prophet recalls the attention of the godly to a subject the most suitable to them: for when the wicked rise up so cruelly against us, we are apt to think that all things are allowed to them, and then their reproaches and slanders immediately take possession of our minds and thoughts, so that we in a manner measure God’s judgment by their words. Hence when the ungodly deride our faith, and boast that we are forsaken

by God, we succumb, being as it were filled with amazement: and nothing is easier than to shake off from us faith and the memory of God's promises, whenever the ungodly are thus insolent. The Prophet then does not without cause apply a remedy which ought to be carefully observed by us. *Who say, condemned is Zion;* but they are like the blind when judging of colors, *for they understand not the counsel of Jehovah and his thoughts they know not.* We now then see what the Prophet had in view, which was to show, — that the faithful would be unwise and foolish, if they formed an opinion of God's judgment according to the boasting of the ungodly: for Satan carries them away in a furious manner; and when the Lord gives them liberty to do evil, they think that they shall be conquerors to the end. As then the ungodly are thus inebriated with foolish confidence, and despise not only men, but God himself, the Prophet here holds up and supports the minds of the godly that they might ascend higher, and thus understand that the design of God was not the same as what the wicked thought, who neither belonged to nor approached God. ^{F73}

It is especially needful to know this truth. Some at the first sight may think it frigid, "O! than, what does the Prophet mean? he says that what these declare is not the design of Jehovah; and this we know." But were all to examine the subject, they would then confess with one mouth, that nothing could have been more seasonable than this consolation. Now we are wounded by reproaches, and this very often happens to ingenuous men; and then, while the ungodly vomit forth their slanders, we think that God rests indifferently in heaven; and one of their words, like a cloud, obscures the judgment of God. As soon as any one of the wicked derides us, and laughs at our simplicity, threatens ferociously, and spreads forth his terrors, his words, as I have said, are like a cloud intervening between us and God. This is the reason why the Prophet says here, that the thoughts of Jehovah are different, and that his counsel is different: in short, the Prophet's object is to show, that whenever the ungodly thus proudly despise us, and also reproachfully threaten and terrify us, we ought to raise our thoughts to heaven. — Why so? Because the design of God is another. Their boastings then will vanish, for they arise from nothing, and they shall come to nothing, but the purpose of God shall stand.

But let us now see why the Prophet spoke here of the design and thoughts of God: for if only these two words are brought before us, there is certainly but little solid comfort, and nothing that has much force or

power. There is then another principle to be understood, — that the thoughts of God are known to us, who are taught in his school. The counsel of God then is not hidden, for it is revealed to us in his Word. Consolation therefore depends on a higher and a more recondite doctrine; that is, that the faithful, in their miseries, ought to contemplate the counsel of God as in a mirror. And what is this? that when he afflicts us, he holds a remedy in his hand, and that when he throws us into the grave, he can restore us to life and safety. When, therefore, we understand this design of God, — that he chastens his Church with temporal evils, and that the issue will ever be most salutary, — when this is known by us, there is then no reason why the slanders of the ungodly should deject our minds; and when they vomit forth all their reproaches, we ought to adhere firmly to this counsel of God. But that the ungodly are thus proud is no matter of wonder; for if they raise their horns against God, why should they not despise us also, who are so few in number, and of hardly any influence, at least not equal to what they possess? The Church is indeed contemptible in the eyes of the world; and it is no wonder if our enemies thus deride us, and load us with ridicule and contempt, when they dare to act so frowardly towards God. But it is enough for us to know, that they do not understand the counsel of God. We now then see the Prophet's meaning, and an explanation follows, —

For thou shalt assemble them, he says, as a sheaf^{F74} to the floor. The Prophet adds this clause as an explanation, that we may know what the counsel of God is, which he has mentioned, and that is, that God will collect the enemies as a sheaf. What is a sheaf? It is a small quantity of corn, it may be three hundred or a thousand ears of corn: they are ears of corn, and carried in a man's hand. And then, what is to be done with the sheaf? It is to be thrashed on the floor. It was indeed difficult to believe, that enemies, when thus collected together on every side, would be like a sheaf. If an army assembled against us, not only ten or twenty thousand, but a much larger number, who would think, according to the judgment of the flesh, that they would be like a sheaf? They shall be as so many deaths and graves: even the thought of God ought to be to us of more account than the formidable power of men. Whenever, therefore, our enemies exceed us in strength and number, let us learn to arise to that secret counsel of God, of which our Prophet now speaks; and then it will be easy for us to regard a vast multitude to be no more than a handful. And he says, that

our enemies are to be gathered to a floor, that they may be thrashed there. They assemble themselves for another purpose; for they think that we shall be presently in their power, that they may swallow us up; but when they thus collect themselves and their forces, the Lord will frustrate their purpose and cause them to be thrashed by us. It follows, —

Arise and thrash, daughter of Zion; for I have made thy horn iron, and thy hoofs brass. The Prophet here confirms what he had previously said: and he exhorts the daughter of Zion to arise; for it was necessary for her to have been cast down, so as to lie prostrate on the ground. God did not indeed restore at once his Church, but afflicted her for a time, so that she differed nothing from a dead man. As then a dead body lies on the ground without any feeling, so also did the Church of God lie prostrate. This is the reason why the Prophet now says, *Arise, daughter of Zion*; as though God, by his voice, roused the dead. We hence see, that the word קומי, *kumi*, is emphatical; for the Prophet reminds us, that there is no reason for the faithful wholly to despair, when they find themselves thus cast down, for their restoration is in the hand and power of God, as it is the peculiar office of God to raise the dead. And this same truth ought to be applied for our us, whenever we are so cast down, that no strength, no vigor, remains in us. How then can we rise again? By the power of God, who by his voice alone can restore us to life, which seemed to be wholly extinct.

He afterwards subjoins, *Thrash, for I have made thy horn iron, and thy hoofs brass.* A mode of thrashing, we know, was in use among the Jews the same with that in Italy and at this day in French Provence. We here thrash the corn with flails; but there by treading. The Prophet speaks here of this custom, and compares the Church of God to oxen; as though he said “The Jews shall be like oxen with iron horns and brazen hoofs that they may lay prostrate under them the whole strength of the nations. However much then the nations may now excel, I will subject them under the feet of my people, as if sheaves were thrashed by them.”

He then adds, ^{F75} *And thou shalt separate or consecrate their wealth to Jehovah, and their substance* ^{F76} *to the Lord of the whole earth.* Here the Prophet specifies the end for which God had purposed to subject the heathen nations to his chosen people, — that he might be glorified. This is the meaning. But they have refined too much in allegories, who have thought that this prophecy ought to be confined to the time of Christ: for

the Prophet no doubt meant to extend consolation to the whole kingdom of Christ, from the beginning to the end. Others, not more correctly, say, that this is to be referred to the Babylonian captivity because then Daniel and some others thrashed the people, when heathen kings were induced through their teaching to restore the temple, and also to offer some worship to the God of Israel. But on this point they are both mistaken, because they take the word thrashing in a different sense from the Prophet; for it commonly means that heathen nations are to be subjected to the Church of God: and this takes place, whenever God stretches forth his hand to the faithful, and suffers not the ungodly to exercise their cruelty as they wish; yea, when he makes them humbly to supplicate the faithful. This often happens in the world, as it is written of Christ, ‘thy enemies shall lick the earth,’ (<197209> Psalm 72:9.) But this prophecy shall not be fulfilled until the last coming of Christ. We indeed begin to tread on our enemies whenever God by his power destroys them, or at least causes them to tremble and to be cast down, as we find that they dread whenever any change takes place; and then they blandly profess that they desire to serve God. So at this day it has happened both in France and in Italy. How many hypocrites, for the sake of an earthly advantage, have submitted themselves to God? and how many such England produced when the Gospel flourished there? All the courtiers, and others who were unwilling to incur the displeasure of the king, professed themselves to be the very best lovers of religion. (*optimos pietatis cultores*, — the best observers of piety) But yet this is ever the case,

‘Aliens have been false to thee,’ (<191844> Psalm 18:44.)

We hence see what the prophet means when he speaks of thrashing: he intimates, that the Lord would often cause that the enemies of the Church should be bruised, though no one crushed them: but, as I have said, we must look forward to the last day, if we wish to see the complete fulfillment of this prophecy.

He afterwards adds, *Thou shalt consecrate their wealth to Jehovah, and their substance to the Lord of the whole earth*. The Prophet shows here, that the dominion is not to be hoped for by the children of God, that they may abound in worldly pleasures, and appropriate every thing to themselves and also abuse their power, as ungodly men are wont to do; but that all is to be applied to the worship and the glory of God. For what

purpose, then does God design his Church to become eminent? That he himself may alone shine forth, and that the faithful may rightly enjoy their honor, and not become thereby proud. There is, therefore nothing more alien to the power of the Church than pride, or cruelty, or avarice. This, then that is said ought to be carefully observed, *their wealth thou shalt consecrate to Jehovah*. He had spoken before of power, “Thou shalt bind strong people, thou shalt thrash them, and thou shalt tread them under thy feet;” but lest the faithful should turn all this to a purpose the Lord had not designed, a most suitable correction is immediately added, and that is, that this power shall not be exercised according to the will of men, but according to the will of God: Thou shalt then consecrate, etc.; and he uses the word **כֶּרֶם**, *cherem*, which means to make a thing an anathema or an offering; as though he said “God will raise his Church that it may rule over its enemies; but let the faithful at the same time take heed, that they rule not tyrannically; for God designs ever to reign alone: therefore the whole excellency, the whole dignity, the whole power of the Church ought to be applied for this end, — that all things may become subject to God, and every thing among the nations may be altogether sacred to him so that the worship of God may flourish among the conquerors, as well as among the conquered.” We now perceive the Prophet’s object in speaking of consecrating the wealth of the nations. Now follows —

CHAPTER 5

<330501> MICAH 5:1-2

1. Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

1. ^{F77} Nunc colligas te (vel, obsidione cingeris, ut alii vertunt) filia congregationis (hoc est, turmae;) obsidionem posuit contra nos; in virga percutient ad maxillam judicem Israel.

2. But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

2. Et tu Beth-lehem Ephrata, parva ad essendum (ut ita loquar) inter millia Jehudah; ex te mihi egredietur ad essendum dominatorem (sic transfero durius, ut sit dominator) in Israel: et egressus ejus ab initio, a diebus seculi.

To encourage the faithful to patience, the Prophet again reminds them that hard and severe time was nigh; for it was needful to put them in mind often of the approaching calamity, lest terror should wholly discourage them. As then there was danger from despair, the Prophet often repeats what he has already said of God's judgment, which was then suspending over the people of Israel. And this mode and order of teaching ought to be observed. When the Prophets threaten us, or denounce the punishment we have deserved, we either become torpid, or grow angry with God, and murmur: but when they set forth any thing of comfort, we then indulge ourselves and become too secure. It is therefore necessary to connect threatening with promises, so that we may be always ready to endure temporal evils, and that our minds, sustained by hope, may, at the same time, depend on the Lord, and recomb on him. It was for this reason that the Prophet again mentions what he had already several times stated, — that the Jews would be surrounded by a siege. How do these two things agree, — that the enemies, assembled together, would be like sheaves which are taken to the floor to be trodden by the feet of animals, — and

that the Jews would be besieged? I answer, that these things harmonize, because the temporary punishment, which God would inflict on his Church, would not prevent him to restore it again whenever it pleased him. Lest, therefore, security should creep over the minds of the godly, the Prophet designed often to remind them of that dreadful calamity which might have entirely upset them, had no support been afforded them, that is, had not God sustained them by his word.

Now then thou shalt assemble thyself, he says, *O daughter of a troop*. The verb **התגדדי**, *etgaddi*, and the noun **גדוד**, *gadud*, sound alike; as though he said, Thou shalt be collected, O daughter of collection. The Prophet addresses Jerusalem: but we must see why he calls her the daughter of collection. Some think that by this word is designated the splendid and wealthy state of Jerusalem; as though the Prophet said, — “This city has been hitherto populous, but now it shall be reduced to such straits that none shall dare to go forth beyond its gates, for they shall on every side be surrounded.” But the Prophet calls Jerusalem the daughter of a troop in another sense, — because they were wont to occasion great troubles: as thieves agree together, and meet in troops for the purpose of committing plunder; so also the Prophet calls Jerusalem the daughter of a troop, for its citizens were wont willfully to do great evils, and like robbers to use violence. Thou then, he says, *shalt now be collected*; that is, thou shalt not send forth thy troops, but enemies shall assemble thee together by a severe siege, so that thou shalt contract thyself like a bundle.

There are, then, two clauses in this verse, — that though the Lord resolved to help his Church, he would yet straiten her for a time, — and then the Prophet shows the reason, lest they complained that they were too severely treated: “You have been hitherto,” he says, “without a cause oppressive to others: the time then is come when the Lord will return to you your recompense.” As Isaiah says

‘Woe to thee, plunderer!

Shalt thou not also be exposed to plunder?’ ^{<233301>} Isaiah 33:1;

so also in this place, — “Ye have assembled in troops, that ye might pillage innocent men; therefore other troops shall now encircle you; nay, ye shall be beset by your own fear.” The verb is in Hithpael: he says not, “Thou daughter of a troop shalt be now encircled;” but he says “Thou shalt gather thyself.”

He then adds, *A siege has he set against thee*. This may refer to God; but it must be understood only of enemies: for the Prophet immediately adds, *They shall strive with the rod*, etc. in the plural number, — *They shall then strike with the rod the cheek of the judge of Israel*. He means that the Jews would be subdued by their enemies that their judges and governors would be exposed to every kind of contumely and dishonor, for to strike on the cheek is to offer the greatest indignity; as indeed it is the greatest contempt, as Demosthenes says, and is so mentioned by the lawyers. We now then perceive, that the Prophet's object was to show, — that the Jews in vain boasted of their kingdom and civil constitution, for the Lord would expose the governors of that kingdom to extreme contempt. The enemies then *shall strike their judges even on the cheek*.^{F78}

But there follows immediately a consolation: we hence see that the Prophet, at one time, humbles the children of God: and prepares them for enduring the cross; and then he mitigates all sorrow; yea, and makes them to rejoice in the midst of their evils. For this purpose he adds what follows

Thou Bethlehem Ephratah, art small, that thou shouldest be among the thousands of Judah. As Matthew quotes this passage differently, some think that it ought to be read as a question, And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, art thou the least among the provinces of Judah? Matthew says “Thou art by no means the least, thou excellest.”^{F79} But what need there is of distorting the words of the Prophet, as it was not the design of the Evangelist to relate the expressions of the Prophet, but only to point out the passage. As to the words, Matthew had regards to the condition of the town Bethlehem, such as it was at the coming of Christ. It then indeed began to be eminent: but the Prophet represents here how ignoble and mean a place Bethlehem then was, *Thou*, he says, *art the least among the thousands of Judah*. Some, not very wisely, give this explanation, “Thou art the least among the thousands of Judah”; that is, “Though there might be a thousand towns in the tribe of Judah, yet thou couldest hardly have a place among so great a number.” But this has been said through ignorance of a prevailing custom: for the Jews, we know, were wont to divide their districts into thousands or chiliads. As in the army there are centurions, so also in the divisions of every nation there are hundreds; there are also in an army tribunes, who preside over a thousand men. Thus the Prophet calls them thousands, that is, tribunes; for the districts are so arranged, that the

town, which, with its villages, could bring forth three thousand men, had three prefectures; and it had three tribunes, or four or five, if it was larger. The Prophet then, in order to show that this town was small and hardly of any account, says, Thou, Bethlehem, art hardly sufficient to be one province. And it was a proof of its smallness that hardly a thousand men could be made up from Bethlehem and its neighboring villages. There were not, we know, many towns in the tribe of Judah; and yet a large army could be there collected. Since then the town of Bethlehem was so small, that it could hardly attain the rank of a province, it is hence no doubt evident that it was but a mean town. We now perceive what the Prophet had in view.

Thou, Bethlehem, he says, *art small among the cities of Judah*; yet *arise*, or go forth, *for me shall one from thee, who is to be a Ruler in Israel*. He calls it Bethlehem Ephratah; for they say that there was another Bethlehem in the tribe of Zebulun, and we know that Ephratah in meaning is nearly the same with Bethlehem; for both designate an abundance of fruit or provisions: and there David was born.

I will now proceed to the second clause, *From thee shall go forth for me one who is to be a Ruler*. Here the Prophet introduces God as the speaker, *go forth*, he says, *shall one for me*. God declares in this passage that it was not his purpose so to destroy his people, but that he intended, after a season, to restore them again. He therefore recalls the attention of the faithful to himself and to his eternal counsel; as though he said, — “I have thus for a time cast you away, that I may yet manifest my care for you.” *For me then shall go forth one who is to be a Ruler in Israel*. Now there is no doubt but that the Prophet at the sable time recalls the attention of the faithful to the promise which had been given to David. For whence arises the hope of salvation to the chosen people, except from the perpetuity of that kingdom? The Prophet now says, — “There is indeed a reason, according to the perception of the flesh, why the faithful should despond; for whence does their confidence arise, except from the kingdom of David? and from what place is David to arise? Even from Bethlehem; for Bethlehem has been called the city of David; and yet it is an obscure and a small town, and can hardly be considered a common province. Since it is so, the minds of the faithful may be depressed; but this smallness shall be no hindrance to the Lord, that he should not bring forth from thence a new king.”

Even before the time of David Bethlehem was a small town, and one of the most common provinces. Who could have expected that a king would have been chosen from such a hamlet, and then, that he should come from a hut? for David belonged to a pastoral family; his father was a shepherd, and he was the least among his brethren. Who then could have thought that light would have arisen from such a corner, yea, from so mean a cottage? This was done contrary to the expectations of men. Hence the Prophet sets here before the faithful a similar expectation for their comfort; as though he said, — “Has not God once formed a most perfect state of things by making David a king, so that the people became in every respect happy and blessed? And whence did David come? It was from Bethlehem. There is then no reason why your present miseries should over-much distress you; for God can again from the same place bring forth a king to you, and he will do so.”

Thou then Bethlehem, small art thou, etc. The prophet doubtless intended here that the faithful should consider of what kind was the beginning of that most perfect state, when David was chosen king. David was a shepherd, a man in humble life, without reputation, without influence, and even the humblest among his brethren. Since then God had drawn light out of darkness there was no cause for the faithful to despair of a future restoration, considering what had been the beginning of the previous happy condition of the people. We now understand the Prophet’s meaning. But the rest I cannot finish today; I must therefore defer it till tomorrow.

PRAYER.

Greet, Almighty God, that as we cease not to provoke thy wrath against us, and as it is needful for us to be often chastised by thy hand, that we may be humbled and learn to submit ourselves to thee in true and willing obedience, — O grant, that we faint not under thy scourges, but ever raise up our minds to the hope of deliverance, which thou givest to us through our Mediator; whom thou hast once for all sent into the world, that thou mightest through him reconcile us to thyself, and through whom also thou bringest help whenever we need it and may we at the same time learn to rely on thy only-begotten Son, so that with courageous minds we may pass through all the miseries of this world, and

never at any time grow weary, until having at length obtained the victory, we come to that blessed rest and enjoy the fruit of our victory, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE NINETY-FIRST

We began yesterday to explain the promise by which our Prophet designed to sustain the minds of the faithful, lest they should despair in their heavy trial. He reminds them, as it has been stated, of the commencement of the kingdom: as David had been raised as it were from nothing, and God has given in him an example of his wonderful grace, the Prophet reminds the godly, that the same is now to be expected, that God will again raise up the fallen kingdom. “*Go forth then from Bethlehem*, he says, *shall one who is to be a Ruler in Israel*, though it was but a mean town. He calls him a Ruler in Israel; for he had before declared that there would be such a dreadful judgment, that the enemy would strike with the hand the face of the judge; and this was the same as though the Prophet had said, that no honor would be shown to the people, for the chief himself would be beaten. He therefore now promises a new Ruler, he promises that there would be again some civil order to be found among the people; for a governor could not have been struck on the cheek, except all authority and honor had departed. We then see what the Prophet intended by mentioning the word, Ruler; it was to show, that God would again cause that a new Prince would arise to govern the people. It was therefore a remedy to their devastation.

But the Prophet subjoins, *His going forth is from the beginning*, or from far antiquity *and from the days of ages*, that is from the days of eternity. He intimates here that it would not be a sudden thing, that a prince should arise to govern the people; for it had been already long ago determined by God. This is the plain meaning. Some, I know, pertinaciously maintain, that the Prophet speaks here of the eternal existence of Christ; and as for myself I willingly own that the divinity of Christ is here proved to us; but as this will never be allowed by the Jews, I prefer taking the words simply as they are, — that Christ will not come forth unexpectedly from Bethlehem, as though God had previously determined nothing respecting him. *His goings forth, then, are from the beginning*. But others bring a new refinement, — that the Prophet uses the plural number, his goings forth, to designate the twofold nature of Christ: but there is in this an absurdity; for the Prophet could not properly nor wisely mention the human nature of Christ with the divine, with reference to eternity. The Word of God, we know, was eternal; and we know, that when the fullness of time came, as

Paul says, Christ put on our nature, (<480404> Galatians 4:4.) Hence the beginning of Christ as to the flesh was not so old, if his existence be spoken of: to set them together then would have been absurd. It is a common thing in Hebrew to use the plural for the singular number. He says then, that the going forth of Christ is from eternity; for he will not go forth suddenly from Bethlehem, as one who rises unexpectedly to bring help, when things are in a hopeless state, and so rises, when nothing had been foreseen. But the Prophet declares that the going forth of Christ would be different, — that God had from the beginning determined to give his people an eternal king.

At the same time, we must repudiate that gloss with which the Rabbis are pleased; for they say that the Messiah was created before the creation of the world, and also the throne of eternity, and the Law, and other things; but these are insipid fables. The Prophet shows simply, that even before the world was made Christ was chief, no he is also called the Firstborn of every creature, for by him all things were created, (<510115> Colossians 1:15) and the same Word of God, by whom the world was created, is to be the Head of the Church and by him what has been lost is to be recovered. We now then comprehend what the Prophet meant by saying, *the goings forth* of Christ *are from eternity*. But I would not concede to the Jews, that only by the perpetual appointment of God the going forth of Christ has been from the beginning, or from all ages: but two things must be noticed by us, — that Christ, who was manifested in the flesh that he might redeem the Church of God, was the eternal Word, by whom the world was created, — and then, that he was destined by the eternal counsel of God to be the first-born of every creature, and especially to be the Head of the Church, that he might restore a fallen world by his grace and power.

We now then see the reason why the Prophet connects together these two things, — that there would go forth one from Bethlehem who would rule among Israel, — and yet that his goings forth have been from eternity: for if he had only said what I explained yesterday, an objection might easily have been made, and this might have come into the mind of some, — “Why dost thou say that one will come from Bethlehem who will govern the chosen people, as though God were to contrive a new remedy on seeing that it is all over with respect to the deliverance of his Church?” The Prophet here anticipates this objection, and reminds us, that his goings forth have been from eternity, that they have been already decreed, even

from the beginning; for with God there is nothing new, so that he should stand in need of holding any unlooked for consultation; as is the case with us when any thing happens which we in no degree apprehended; we then find it necessary to devise some new measures. The Prophet shows that nothing of this kind can happen to God: but all this, — that people are reduced to nothing, — and that they are again restored by Christ, — all this is overruled by his secret and incomprehensible providence. His goings forth then are from the beginning, and from the days of eternity. Let us proceed —

<330503> **MICAH 5:3**

3. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.

3. Propterea ^{F80} dabit eos (hoc est, ponet eos, vel, relinquet) usque ad tempus quo parturiens pariet; et revertentur ad filios Israel residuum fratrum ejus.

The Prophet here again so moderates his words, that the Jews might understand, that they were to endure many evils before God relieved their miseries. He wished then here to prepare the minds of the godly to bear evils, that they might not despair in great troubles, nor be depressed by extreme fear. He then states these two things, — that the people, as they deserved, would be heavily afflicted, — and then that God, notwithstanding such severe punishment, would be mindful of his covenant, so as to gather at length some remnants and not to suffer his people to be wholly destroyed. He therefore promises a middle course between a prosperous state and destruction. The people, says the Prophet, shall not continue entire. — How so? For God will cut off the kingdom and the city; and yet he will afford relief to the miserable: When they shall think that they are given up to entire ruin, he will stretch forth his hand to them. This is the sum of the whole.

He then says that they shall be delivered up, that is, forsaken by God, *until she who is in travail bringeth forth.* ^{F81} There are those who apply this to the blessed virgin; as though Micah had said that the Jews were to look forward to the time when the Virgin would bring forth Christ: but all may easily see that this is a forced interpretation. The Prophet, I have no

doubt, in using this similitude, compares the body of the people to a woman with child. The similitude of a woman in travail is variously applied. The wicked, when they promise to themselves impunity, are suddenly and violently laid hold on: thus their destruction is like the travail of a woman with child. But the meaning of this passage is different; for the Prophet says that the Jews would be like pregnant women, for this reason, — that though they would have to endure the greatest sorrows, there yet would follow a joyful and happy issue. And Christ himself employs this example for the same purpose,

‘A woman,’ he says, ‘has sorrow when she brings forth, but immediately rejoices when she sees a man born into the world,’
(^{<431621>} John 16:21.)

So Micah says in this place, that the chosen people would have a happy deliverance from their miseries, for they would bring forth. There shall indeed be the most grievous sorrows, but their issue will be joy, that is, when they shall know that they and their salvation had been the objects of God’s care, when they shall understand that their chastisements had been useful to them. *Until then she who is in travail bringeth forth, God, he says, will forsake them.*

There are then two clauses in this verse; — the first is, that the Jews were for a time to be forsaken, as though they were no longer under the power and protection of God; — the other is that God would be always their guardian, for a bringing forth would follow their sorrows. The following passage in Isaiah is of an opposite character;

‘We have been in sorrow, we have been in travail,
and we brought forth wind,’ (^{<232618>} Isaiah 26:18.)

The faithful complain there that they had been oppressed with the severest troubles, and had come to the birth, but that they brought forth nothing but wind, that is, that they had been deceived by vain expectation, for the issue did not prove to be what they had hoped. But the Lord promises here by Micah something better, and that is, that the end of all their evils would be the happy restoration of the people, as when a woman receives a compensation for all her sorrows when she sees that a child is born.

And he confirms this sentence by another, when he says, *To the children of Israel shall return, or be converted, the residue of his brethren.*^{F82} The Prophet then intimates that it could not be otherwise but that God would not only scatter, but tread under foot his people, so that their calamity would threaten an unavoidable destruction. This is one thing; but in the meantime he promises that there would be some saved. But he speaks of a remnant, as we have observed elsewhere, lest hypocrites should think that they could escape unpunished, while they trifled with God. The Prophet then shows that there would come such a calamity as would nearly extinguish the people, but that some would be preserved through God's mercy and that beyond ordinary expectation.^{F83} We now perceive the intention of the Prophet. It now follows —

<330504> MICAH 5:4	
<p>4. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.</p>	<p>4. Et stabit et pascet in virtute Jehovae, in magnificentia nominis Jehovae Dei sui; et habitabunt, quia nunc magnificabitur usque ad fines terrae.</p>

There is no doubt but that the Prophet continues here to speak of Christ; and though the Jews shamelessly pervert the whole Scripture, they yet cannot deny that Micah calls here the attention of all the godly to the coming of Christ, yea, of all who hope or desire to obtain salvation. This is certain. Let us now see what the Prophet ascribes to Christ.

He shall stand, he says, *and feed in the power of Jehovah.* The word, stand, designates perseverance, as though he had said, that it would not be for a short time that God would gather by Christ the remnant of the people; that it would not be, as it often happens, when some rays of joy shine, and then immediately vanish. The Prophet shows here that the kingdom of Christ would be durable and permanent. It will then proceed; for Christ will not only rule his Church for a few days, but his kingdom will continue to stand through unbroken series of years and of ages. We nor then understand the Prophet's object.

He adds in the second place, *He shall feed in the strength of Jehovah, in the greatness of the name of Jehovah his God;* by which words he means, that

there would be sufficient power in Christ to defend his Church. The Church, we know, is in this world subject to various troubles, for it is never without enemies; for Satan always finds those whom he induces, and whose fury he employs to harass the children of God. As then the Church of God is tossed by many tempests, it has need of a strong and invincible defender. Hence this distinction is now ascribed by our Prophet to Christ, — that *he shall feed in the strength of Jehovah, and in the majesty of his God*. As to the word feed, it no doubt expresses what Christ is to his people, to the flock committed to him and to his care. Christ then rules not in his Church as a dreaded tyrant, who distresses his subjects with fear; but he is a Shepherd who gently deals with his flock. Nothing therefore can exceed the kindness and gentleness of Christ towards the faithful, as he performs the office of a Shepherd: and he prefers to be adorned with this, title, rather than to be called and deemed a kings, or to assume authority to himself. But the Prophet, on the other hand, shows, that the power of Christ would be dreadful to the ungodly and wicked. He shall feed, he says, — with regard to his flock, Christ will put on a character full of gentleness; for nothing, as I have said can imply more kindness than the word shepherd: but as we are on every side surrounded by enemies, the Prophet adds, —

He shall feed *in the power of Jehovah and in the majesty of the name of Jehovah*; that is as much power as there is in God, so much protection will there be in Christ, whenever it will be necessary to defend and protect the Church against her enemies. Let us hence learn that no less safety is to be expected from Christ, than there is of power in God. Now, since the power of God, as we confess, is immeasurable, and since his omnipotence far surpasses and swallows up all our conceptions, let us hence learn to extend both high and low all our hopes. — Why so? Because we have a King sufficiently powerful, who has undertaken to defend us, and to whose protection the Father has committed us. Since then we have been delivered up to Christ's care and defense, there is no cause why we should doubt respecting our safety. He is indeed a Shepherd, and for our sake he thus condescended and refused not so mean a name; for in a shepherd there is no pomp nor grandeur. But though Christ, for our sake, put on the character of a Shepherd, and disowns not the office, he is yet endued with infinite power. — How so? Because he governs not the Church after a human manner, *but in the majesty of the name of his God.*^{F84}

Now, that he subjects Christ to God, he refers to his human nature. Though Christ is God manifested in the flesh, he is yet made subject to God the Father, as our Mediator and the Head of the Church in human nature: he is indeed the middle Person between God and us. This then is the reason why the Prophet now says, that Christ has power, as it were, at the will of another; not that Christ is only man, but as he appears to us in the person of man, he is said to receive power from his Father; and this, as it has been said, with respect to his human nature. There is yet another reason why the Prophet has expressly added this, — that we may know that Christ, as the protector of the Church, cannot be separated from his Father: as then God is God, so Christ is his minister to preserve the Church. In a word, the Prophet means that God is not to be viewed by the faithful, except through the intervening Mediator; and he means also that the Mediator is not to be viewed, except as one who receives supreme power from God himself and who is armed with omnipotence to preserve his people.

He afterwards adds, *They shall dwell; for he shall now be magnified to the extremities of the earth.* He promises a secure habitation to the faithful; for Christ shall be extolled to the utmost regions of the world. We here see that he is promised to foreign nations: for it would have been enough for Christ to exercise his supreme power within the borders of Judea, had only one nation been committed to his safe keeping. But as God the Father intended that he should be the author of salvation to all nations, we hence learn that it was necessary that he should be extolled to the utmost borders of the earth. But with regard to the word dwell, it is explained more fully in the next verse, when the Prophet says—

<330505> MICAH 5:5

5. And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men.

5. Et erit hic pax: Assur quum venerit in terram nostram, et quum calcaverit in palatiis nostris, tunc constituemus super eum septem pastores et octo principes hominum.

Micah, as I have said, confirms his former statement. By the word *dwelling*, he no doubt meant a quiet and peaceable inhabitation; as though he had said, that the children of God would, under Christ, be safe and secure. Now he adds, *And he shall be our peace*. It might have been asked, “Whence will come this secure dwelling? For the land has been very often wasted, and the people have been at length driven to exile. How then can we now venture to hope for what thou promises, that we shall be quiet and secure?” Because, he says, *He shall be our peace*; and we ought to be satisfied with the protection of the King whom God the Father has given us. Let his shadow, then, suffice us, and we shall be safe enough from all troubles. We now see in what sense the Prophet calls Christ the Peace of his people or of his Church; he so calls him because he will drive far away all hurtful things, and will be armed with strength and invincible power to check all the ungodly, that they may not make war on the children of God, or to prevent them in their course, should they excite any disturbances.

We further know, that Christ is in another way our peace; for he has reconciled us to the Father. And what would it avail us to be safe from earthly annoyances, if we were not certain that God is reconciled to us? Except then our minds acquiesce in the paternal benevolence of God, we must necessarily tremble at all times, though no one were to cause us any trouble: nay, were all men our friends, and were all to applaud us, miserable still would be our condition, and we should toil with disquietude, except our consciences were pacified with the sure confidence that God is our Father. Christ then can be our peace in no other way than by reconciling God to us. But at the same time the Prophet speaks generally, — that we shall lie safely under the shadow of Christ, and that no evil ought to be feared, — that though Satan should furiously assail us, and the whole world become mad against us, we ought yet to fear nothing, if Christ keeps and protects us under his wings. This then is the meaning, when it is said here that Christ is our peace.

He afterwards subjoins, *When the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces then we shall raise up against him or on him, seven shepherds and eighty princes of the people.*^{F85} The Prophet intimates that the Church of God would not be free from troubles, even after the coming of Christ: for I am disposed to refer this to the intervening time, though interpreters put another construction on the words of the Prophet. But this meaning, is far more suitable, — that while the help

which God promised was expected and yet suspended, the Assyrians would come, who would pass far and wide through the land of Israel. Hence he says, that though Assur should come to our land, and break through, with such force and violence that we could not drive him out, we shall yet set up for ourselves shepherds and princes against him. It must at the same time be observed, that this prophecy is not to be confined to that short time; for the Prophet speaks generally of the preservation of the Church before as well as after the coming of Christ; as though he said, — “I have said that the king, who shall be born to you, and shall go forth from Bethlehem, shall be your peace; but before he shall be revealed to the world, God will gather his Church, and there shall emerge as from a dead body Princes as well as Shepherds, who will repel unjust violence, nay, who will subdue the Assyrians.”

We now see what the prophet had in view: After having honored Christ with this remarkable commendation — that he alone is sufficient to give us a quiet life, he adds that God would be the preserver of his Church, so as to deliver it from its enemies. But there is a circumstance here expressed which ought to be noticed: Micah says, that when the Assyrians shall pass through the land and tread down all the palaces, God would then become the deliverer of his people. It might have been objected, and said, “Why not sooner? Would it have been better to prevent this? Why! God now looks as it were indifferently on the force of the enemies, and loosens the reins to them, that they plunder the whole land, and break through to the very middle of it. Why then does not God give earlier relief?” But we see the manner in which God intends to preserve his Church: for as the faithful often need some chastisement, God humbles them when it is expedient, and then delivers them. This is the reason why God allowed such liberty to the Assyrians before he supplied assistance. And we also see that this discourse is so moderated by the Prophet, that he shows, on the one hand, that the Church would not always be free from evils, — the Assyrians shall come, they shall tread down our palaces, — this must be endured by God’s children, and ought in time to prepare their minds to bear troubles; but, on the other hand, a consolation follows; for when the Assyrians shall thus penetrate into our land, and nothing shall be concealed or hidden from them, then the Lord will cause new shepherds to arise.

The Prophet means that the body of the people would be for some time mutilated and, as it were, mangled; and so it was, until they returned from

Exile. For he would have said this to no purpose, *We shall set up for ourselves*, if there had been an unbroken succession of regular government; he could not have said in that case, After Assur shall come into our land, we shall set up princes; but, There shall be princes when Assur shall come. The word *set up* denotes then what I have stated, — that the Church would be for a time without any visible head. Christ indeed has always been the Head of the Church; but as he designed himself to be then seen in the family of David as in an image or picture, so the Prophet shows here, that though the faithful would have to see the head cut off and the Church dead, and like a dead body cast aside, when torn from its head; yea, that though the Church would be in this state dreadfully desolated, there is yet a promise of a new resurrection. *We shall* then *set up*, or choose for ourselves shepherds.

If any one raises an objection and says that it was God's office to make shepherds for his people, — this indeed I allow to be true: but this point has not been unwisely mentioned by the Prophet; for he extols here the favor of God, in granting again their liberty to his people. In this especially consists the best condition of the people, when they can choose, by common consent, their own shepherds: for when any one by force usurps the supreme power, it is tyranny; and when men become kings by hereditary right, it seems not consistent with liberty.^{F86} We shall then set up for ourselves princes, says the Prophet; that is, the Lord will not only give breathing time to his Church, and will also cause that she may set up a fixed and a well-ordered government, and that by the common consent of all.

By *seven* and *eight*, the Prophet no doubt meant a great number. When he speaks of the calamities of the Church, it is said, 'There shall not be found any to govern, but children shall rule over you.' But the Prophet says here that there would be many leaders to undertake the care of ruling and defending the people. The governors of the people shall therefore be seven shepherds and eight princes; that is, the Lord will endure many by his Spirit, that they shall be suddenly wise men: though before they were in no repute, though they possessed nothing worthy of great men, yet the Lord will enrich them with the spirit of power, that they shall become fit to rule. The Prophet now adds —

<330506> MICAH 5:6

6. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.

6. Et pascent terram Assur (hoc est, vastabunt; nam metaphoricè hic pascere accipitur pro perdere quemadmodum dicuntur pecora pascere agrum, hoc est quum denudant herba sua; atque ita pastorum ingluviem notat in vorando populo; et alludit ad nomen illud quo usus fuerat: dixerat enim רועים septem pastores; nunc dicit רעה; Videmus ergo Prophetam alludere ad nomen illud quod posuerat: pascent ergo terram Assur) gladio, et terram Nimrod in gladiis suis: et liberabit ab Assur, ubi venerit in terram nostram, et ubi calcaverit in finibus nostris.

In this verse the Prophet says, that the shepherds, chosen by the Church, after it had been miserably oppressed by the tyranny of its enemies, would have a twofold office. They shall first *feed*; that is, nourish the Church of God; — and, secondly, they shall *feed*; that is, destroy the land of Asshur, so that nothing may remain there whole and entire. God will then arm these shepherds with warlike courage; for they must fight boldly and courageously against their enemies: he says, *They shall feed on the land of Nimrod with their swords*. Nimrod, we know, reigned in Chaldea; and we know also that the ten tribes were led away by Shalmanezzer, and that the kingdom of Israel was thus demolished: when the Chaldeans obtained the empire, the kingdom of Judah was also laid waste by them. Now the import of the words is, that these shepherds would be sufficiently strong to oppose all the enemies of the Church, whether they were the Babylonians or the Assyrians. And he names the Assyrians and Babylonians, because they had then a contest with the people of God; and this continued to the coming of Christ, though it is certain that they suffered more troubles from Antiochus than from others: but as he was one of the successors of Alexander, the Prophet here, taking a part for the whole, means, by the Assyrians and Chaldeans, all the enemies of the Church, whoever they might be. *Waste*, he says, *shall these shepherds the*

land of Asshur by the sword, and the land of Nimrod, and that by their swords. ^{F87}

But this shall not be until the Chaldeans and the Assyrians *shall penetrate into our land, and tread in our borders*. The Prophet again reminds the faithful, that they stood in need of patience, and that they were to know that God had not made a vain promise. The import of the whole is, that no deliverance was to be expected from God's hand until the faithful yielded their necks to his yoke, and patiently sustained the evils which were then approaching. The Prophet then mentions the intervening time between that state in which the Jews gloried and their deliverance. Why so? Because they were soon after to be smitten heavily by God's hand; but this, as we have seen, they did not think would take place. Hence he says, — "Since you cannot yet be made to believe that merited punishment is nigh you, experience shall be your teacher. In the meantime, let the faithful provide themselves with courage and, with a meek heart, patiently to submit to God, the righteous Judge: but, at the same time, let them expect a sure deliverance, when they shall have gone through all their evils; for when the ripened time shall come, the Lord will look on his Church; but she must be first afflicted."

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast from the beginning so defended thy Church, that thou hast never wholly forsaken her, and though it had nearly rejected thee by its defections, yet it has been thy pleasure to stand firm to thy covenant, and to show to it thy favor through all ages, until at length the everlasting Redeemer of the whole world appeared, — O grant, that we may experience the same favor at this day, and though we have in various ways provoked thy wrath against us, yet do thou so humble us, that thou mayest sustain us by thy hand; and may we so recumb on those promises which we find in Scripture, that we may at length by our patience overcome our enemies, and in patience possess our souls, until thou raisest up thine hand, and slowest that invincible power which thou hast given to thy only-begotten Son, that he might repress the devil and all the wicked, and preserve us safe and secure from all injuries. Amen.

LECTURE NINETY-SECOND

<330507> MICAH 5:7-8	
<p>7. And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.</p>	<p>7. Et erit residuum Jacobin gentibus, in medio populorum multorum (vel, magnorum,) sicut ros a Jehova, sicut stillae super herbam, quae non expectat hominem, neque sperat in filiis hominum.</p>
<p>8. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.</p>	<p>8. Et erit residuum Jacob in gentibus, in medio populorum multorum (vel, magnorum, ut diximus,) sicut leo inter animalia sylvae, sicut leunculus inter greges ovium, qui si transierit et discerpserit et repuerit, nemo eripiet.</p>

Micah promises here two things as to the future state of the Church, — that God shall defend it without the help and aid of men, — and that he will supply it with strength, so that it will become superior to all enemies. In the first place, to show that the preservation of the Church depends on the mere favor of God, and that there is no need of any earthly aids, he makes use of a most suitable similitude; he says, that the people of God are like a dewy meadow. The Prophet speaks not what is strictly correct; for what he says of the rain and dew is to be applied to the grass or the meadow. ^{F88} *The residue of Jacob, he says, shall be as dew from Jehovah, and drops of rain on the grass.* This cannot be applied according to the design of the Prophet, except you take the dew, as I have already said, for the dewy meadows or for the grass, which draws moisture and vigor from the rains. The sense indeed is by no means obscure, which is, — that God will make his people to grow like the grass, which is fed only by celestial dew, without any culture or labor on the part of men: and this is also what the Prophet expressly mentions; for he says, that the grass of which he

speaks waits not for men, nor grows through men's care, but grows through the dew of heaven.

But that we may better understand the Prophet's intention, I shall briefly notice the words. *There shall be*, he says, *the residue of Jacob*. He shows here that the whole people would not be preserved; for he had before spoken of their destruction. We hence see that this promise is to be confined to the seed, which God had wonderfully preserved in the calamitous state of the Church, yea, even in its almost total destruction. Then this promise belongs not to the whole body of the people, but to a small number; and hence he uses as before, the word שְׂאֲרִית, *sharit*, a remnant or residue. *There shall then be the residue of Jacob;*^{F89} that is, though the people shall nearly all perish, yet there shall be some residue.

He then adds, *Among great* or many *nations*. There is here a contrast between the remnants and great nations: and the Prophet has not unnecessarily added the expression בְּקֶרֶב, *bekoreb*, in the midst. There are then three things to be observed here, — that God does not promise deliverance to the whole people, but to a residue only, — and then, that he promises this deliverance among powerful or many nations, as though he said, — “Though the Church of God shall not excel in number, nay, so great may be the number of its enemies, as to be sufficient to overwhelm it, yet God will cause it to grow and to propagate: in a word, its enemies, though many in number, and strong in force and power, shall not yet hinder the Lord, that he should not increase his Church more and more;” — and the third particular is what the expression, *in the midst*, intimates, and that is, that the people of God shall be besieged on every side. When enemies come upon us only from one part, it is not so very distressing, but when they surround us, being in front, and behind, and on both sides, then our condition seems miserable indeed; for when they thus press on us on all sides, they hardly allow us time to draw our breath. But the Prophet declares, that though surrounded on all sides by enemies, yet the Church would be safe.

He now adds, כְּמַלְאֵת יְהוָה, *cathel meat Ieve*, *As a dew from Jehovah*; that is, it shall be, as I have said, as the grass, which is nourished and grows by means of dew from heaven, and as grass, which flourishes, not through the culture or labor of men, but which God himself makes to grow. He might have merely said, as the dew, but he adds, from Jehovah, that he

might make a distinction between God and man, and show that the power of God is alone sufficient to support and sustain the Church, though men brought no assistance. And this is expressed more clearly in the next clause, when he says, *As drops of rain on the grass, which waits not for man, nor tarries for the sons of men.* We now then see that the faithful have their attention called to God alone, that they may understand that they are to be safe through his favor, that if all helps on earth failed, they ought not to fear, since they can be effectually sustained by the power of God alone: for God makes grass to grow on mountains and in meadows without the help and labor of man; and thus he can defend his Church without any foreign aid, but by his own hidden, and, so to speak, his own intrinsic power.

Then follows this promise, — that God will arm his people with invincible and irresistible power, that they may be superior to all their enemies. Hence he says, that *the residue of Israel shall be like a lion among the beasts of the forests and like a young lion among a flock of sheep.* As a strong lion then is superior to other beasts, and as a young lion dares ferociously to attack a flock of sheep; so he says, the people of Israel shall be; they shall be like lions, filling their enemies with terror, yea, and plundering and scattering them, so that no one will dare to resist them. The Prophet, by speaking thus, does not mean, that the people of God would be cruel and sanguinary: for we know that when the Prophets use similes of this kind, they express something not strictly suitable; for who would be so foolish as to select every thing that belongs to a lion, and apply it to the Church of God. Then the reason for this similitude must be observed; it was to show, that the faithful shall be endued with a power so superior to that of their enemies, that they shall be a terror to them. It does not hence follow that they shall be cruel.

But we must, at the same time, see what the Lord promises to his Church. Though God then recommends to his children the spirit of meekness, yet the faithful may still be a thread to their enemies; they ought, however, to observe what is just towards them, and to keep themselves within proper bounds. And yet Micah says, that they shall be endued with such power that they shall drive their enemies afar off; yea, that they shall plunder and tear them in pieces, while no one will be able to resist them.^{F90} But these two things are necessary as to the preservation of the Church, that God may make it grow; for except it be miraculously increased, it can never

grow; and then it has need of a strong and powerful defense against her enemies; for we know that there are always wicked men who oppose the Church, yea, who apply all their powers to destroy it: it is therefore necessary that it should be supplied by the Lord with invincible strength, as our Prophet declares here. Let us proceed —

<330509> **MICAH 5:9**

9. Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.

9. Exaltabitur manus tua super hostes tuis, et cuncti, adversarii tui excidentur.

He confirms what is said in the last verse, and expresses in other words what he meant, and what we have explained, — that though the Church must contend with many strong and violent enemies, it will not yet fail, for the Lord will supply it with strength from heaven. *Exalted, he says, shall be thy hand, that all thine enemies may be cut off.* He promises not that the Church shall be in a quiet state, but victorious, and declares also that there will never be wanting enemies. This promise, then, ought to arm us for enduring patiently, as we cannot conquer except by fighting. As then there will be always enemies to oppose the Church of God; yea, to attempt its ruin, the Prophet says here, *Exalted shall be thy hand above thine enemies.*

But it may be asked, When has this promise been fulfilled? For we know that since the people had been led away into the Babylonian exile, they had always been either tributaries, or kept under cruel tyranny, or at least had been unequal to their enemies. But this principle ought ever to be remembered, — that the faithful ought to be satisfied with victory, — that however hard they may be pressed, and however constant may be the contests which they have to carry on, and however wearisome, this one thing ought still to be sufficient for them — that they shall not wholly perish. And it appears evident, that God's people have always been preserved by his invincible hand, however numerous have been their opposing enemies. We must also keep in mind what we have just heard, — that the promise here is not made to the whole people, but to a residue only. And it surpasses the expectation of the whole world, that even a small member could have survived so many slaughters, by which they might have been swallowed up a hundred times. Now then we see that it

had not been without reason promised to the faithful, that they should be made conquerors over all their enemies. But this has not been really fulfilled, except under the conflict of the cross. It now follows —

<330510> MICAH 5:10-15	
10. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots:	10. Et accidet in die illo, dicit Jehova, excidam equos tuos e medio tui, et perdam quadrigas tuas;
11. And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds:	11. Et excidam urbes terrae tuae, et evertam cunctas munitiones tuas;
12. And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers:	12. Et excidam angures (vel, divinos) e manu tua; et praestigiatos non erunt tibi (haec lengenda sunt in uno contextu;)
13. Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands.	13. Et excidam scuptilia tua et statuas tuas e medio tui; et non adorabis amplius opus manuum tuarum;
14. And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee: so will I destroy thy cities.	14. Et delebo lucos tuos e mediotui, et detraham hostes tuos (vel, urbes tuas; utroque enim verti potest;)
15. And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.	15. Et faciam in ira et furore vindictam in gentibus quae non audierunt (vel, quam non audierunt; dicam de utroque.)

There is introduced here a most necessary admonition, in order that the faithful may know, how they are to be preserved by the hand and favor of God, even when they shall be stripped of all their helps, yea, even when God shall take away all those impediments, which would otherwise close up the way against his favor. The sum of the whole then is, — that the Church shall not otherwise be saved by God’s kindness than by being

deprived of all her strength and defenses, and also by having her obstacles removed by God, even those which in a manner prevented his hand from being put forth to save his people. For the Prophet mentions here cities, then fortified places, he mentions horses and chariots. These, we know, are not in themselves to be condemned: but he means, that as the people foolishly placed confidence in earthly things, the salvation of God could not otherwise come to them than by stripping them of all vain and false confidence. This is one thing. Then, on the other hand, he mentions groves, he mentions carved images and statues, he mentions augurs and diviners: these were corruptions, which closed the door against the favor of God; for a people, given to idolatry, could not call upon God nor hope in him as the author of salvation. We now then perceive the Prophet's design. It now remains for me to run over the words.

He says first, *It shall be in that day, saith Jehovah, that I will cut off thine horses.*^{F91} Here the Prophet enumerates those things which could not in themselves be ascribed to any thing wrong: for as God has created horses for the use of men, so also he allows them to be for our service. Why then does the Prophet say, that the Church could not be delivered, except horses were taken away? It was owing to an accidental fault; for when men abound in forces, they instantly fix their hope on them. As then such an abuse of God's gifts had prevailed among the people of Israel, it was necessary that horses should be taken away. God indeed could have humbled their minds or withdrawn their confidence from their horses and chariots: but it hence appears how deep are the roots of presumption in the hearts of men, that they cannot be otherwise torn up, than by having the things themselves cut off. To have horses and to have chariots is the bounty of God: for how can we have chariots and horses and other things, except through God's kindness? And yet God cannot find a way by which he can do us good, except by taking away his former gifts. Here then Micah touches the hearts of the people much more sharply than before, when he says, that salvation cannot proceed from the Lord, except their horses were destroyed; as though he said, — "Ye see how great is your wickedness; God has hitherto dealt bountifully with you, since he has enriched you, and has also given you horses. Now as he sees that you abuse these gifts, he complains that all ways of access to you are closed up, as ye do not receive his kindness. Inasmuch as your horses and your chariots engross your attention, ye in a manner drive God far away from

you. That he may therefore come to you, he will open a way for himself by removing all the obstacles and hindrances.”

We hence learn, that though all God’s benefits ought to raise us up to heaven, serving as kinds of vehicles, they are yet turned, through our wickedness, to another purpose, and are made intervening obstacles between us and God. Hereby then is our ingratitude proved; and hence it comes, that God, when he intends to make his salvation known to us is in a manner constrained to take away and remove from us his benefits. We now then understand what the Prophet had in view when he mentioned horses and chariots. For he does not threaten here, as some think, that the people would be merely deprived of all God’s gifts that they might see in their destitution and want only signs of a curse; by no means, but it is rather a promise, that is, that God will turn aside all impediments by which he was for a time prevented from bringing help to his people. This doctrine ought at the same time to avail for bringing no ordinary comfort. It is hard and bitter to the flesh to be brought down. Hence the people of Israel were little able at first to bear their lot with submission, when they saw themselves stripped of God’s benefits: but the Prophet sets before them a compensations which was capable of soothing all their grief, — “This,” he says, “shall be for your chief good — that God will deprive you of horses and chariots; for the way which your horses and chariots now occupy shall be cleared. While ye are replenished with abundant forces, ye drive away God far from you, and there is no way open for him. He will therefore prepare a way for himself; and this will be the case when your land shall be made naked, when nothing will intervene to prevent him from coming to you.”

He afterwards subjoins, *I will cut off the cities of thy land*, and I will destroy all *thy fortresses*. This verse is to be taken in the same sense. That the people dwelt in fortified cities, and had defenses and fortified places, was not of itself displeasing to God. But as the people habituated themselves to a false confidence, and as it were hardened themselves in it, so that this evil could not be remedied without taking away those things to which it is attached, the Prophet says here, *I will cut off the cities of your land*, and then, I will cut off your defenses and fortified places. Is it that they may be plundered with impunity by their enemies? By no means, but that the favor of God may be made glorious in their deliverance. For they could not ascribe it to their cities that they kept off enemies, but were

constrained to acknowledge the hand of God, and to confess him to have been their only deliverer; for they were exposed to enemies, and there was no aid for them in the land. God then will thus render more evident his favor, when their cities and fortified places shall be cut off. We hence learn that the faithful at this day have no cause to murmur if they are without great riches, and if they are not formidable for the multitude of their horses, nor for the number and strength of their men. Why so? Because it is the Lord's will that we should be like sheep, that we might depend wholly on his power, and know that we cannot be otherwise safe than under his protection. This reason then ought to comfort us, that it may not be grievous to us, when we find that we are in the midst of wolves, and that we have no equal strength to contend with them; for even this destitution hardly extorts from us a real confession that our safety is in the hand of God. We are always proud. How would it be, were the Church at this day in a flourishing state and all enemies subdued, were there no danger, no fear? Surely earth and heaven could not bear the foolish self-confidence of men. There is therefore no wonder that God thus holds us in, and that while he supports us by his grace, he deprives us of all earthly helps and aids, that we may learn that he alone is the author of our salvation.

This truth ought to be carefully contemplated by us. Whenever we see that the Church of God, though not possessing any great power, is yet diminished daily, yea, and becomes, so to speak, like a naked land, without any defenses, it so happens, in order that the protection of God may be alone sufficient for us, and that he may wholly tear away from our hearts all haughtiness and pride, and dissipate all those vain confidences by which we not only obscure the glory of God, but, as far as we can, entirely cover it over. In short, as there is nothing better for us than to be preserved by the hand of God, we ought to bear patiently the removal of all those impediments which close up the way against God, and, in a manner, keep off his hand from us, when he is ready to extend it for the purpose of delivering us. For when our minds are inflated with foolish self-confidence, we neglect God; and thus a wall intervenes, which prevents him to help us. Who would not wish, seeing himself in extreme danger and help not far distant, that an intercepting wall should immediately fall down? Thus God is near at hand, as he has promised; but there are many walls and many obstacles, from the ruin of which, if we would be safe, we must desire and

seek, that God may find an open and free way, in order that he may be able to afford us aid.

The Prophet comes now to the second kind of impediments. We have already said that some things become impediments, as it were, accidentally, when, through our wickedness and misapplication, we turn God's benefits to an end contrary to what he has designed. If, for instance, horses and chariots are given us, to possess them is not in itself an evil, but becomes so through our blindness, that is, when we, blinded by earthly possessions, think ourselves safe, and thus neglect God. But there are other impediments, which are, in their nature, and in themselves, vicious. To these the Prophet now leads us.

I will cut off, he says, *the sorcerers*, כַּשְׁפִּים, *cashephim*. Some render the word jugglers, and others, augurs or diviners. We cannot know of a certainty what kind of superstition it was, nor the other which immediately follows: for the Prophet mentions here two words which mean nearly the same thing. There is no doubt but that some, in that age, were called augurs or diviners, and others called jugglers or astrologers who are now called fortune-tellers. But on this subject there is no necessity of much labor; for the Prophet simply shows here that the people could not be preserved by Gods unless they were cleansed from these defilements. These superstitions, we know, were forbidden and condemned by God's Law: but the Law was not able to restrain the wickedness of that people; for they continually turned aside to these evils. God then here shows, that until they had purged the Church, it could not continue safe. Now, in these words, the Prophet reminds the Jews, and also the Israelites, for their benefit, that it was, and had been, through their own fault, that they labored under constant miseries and were not helped by the hand of God. — How so? Because there was no room, as God shows here, for the exercise of his favor; for they were full of auguries and divinations, and of other diabolical arts. “How,” he says, “can I help you, for I have no agreement with Satan? As you are wholly given to wicked superstitions, my favor is rejected by you.”^{F92}

One thing is, that the Prophet intended to humble the people, so that every one might know that it had been through their fault, that God had not brought them help as they wished: but there is another thing, — God promises a cleansing, which would open a way for his favor, — I will take

away, he says, *all the diviners*. Let us then know, that it ought to be deemed the greatest benefit when God takes away from us our superstitions and other vices. For since a diminution, however hard and grievous it may be at first, is useful to us, as we see, when we willfully and openly drive away God from us; is it not a singular favor in God when he suffers us not to be thus separated from him, but prepares a way for himself to be connected with us, and has ever his hand extended to bring us help? Thus much as to these two kinds of impediments.

He now adds, *I will cut off thy graven images and thy statues from the midst of thee; and thou shalt not hereafter bend down before the works of thine hands*. This verse is plain and contains nothing new: for the Prophet teaches that God cannot become propitious to his Church, to keep and make her safe, until he purges her from her filth, even from idolatry and other vices, by which the worship of God was corrupted, or even entirely subverted. *I will, therefore, cut off thy graven images and statues*^{F93} *from the midst of thee*. We see that God anticipates us by his gratuitous goodness, not only by forgiving us, but also by calling us back, when wandering, into the right way. Since then we have deviated from the right way, and God thus withdraws his hand that it might appear that he has cast us away it is certain that we ought not only to pray him to have mercy on us, but also to ascribe to him a higher favor, inasmuch as he takes away the very impediments which separate us from him, and suffer him not to come nigh us. We hence see that God is not only inclined to pardon when men repent, but that it is his peculiar office to remove the obstacles.

This ought to be carefully noticed, that we may know that our salvation, from the first beginning, proceeds from the mere favor of God, — and that we may also learn, that all those things, of which the Papists vainly talk respecting preparations, are mere figments.

He then adds, *thou shalt not bend hereafter before the work of thine hands*. God expresses here the cause why he so much abominates idols, even because he sees that his honor is transferred to them: this is one thing. He further arraigns the Jews as guilty, while he makes evident their defection: for surely nothing could have been more shameful, than to take away from God his honor and worship, and to transfer them to dead things; and he says here by way of reproach, that they were the work of their hands. What can be more insane, than for men to ascribe divinity to their own

inventions, or to believe that it is in the power of men to make a god from wood or stone? This is surely monstrous in the extreme. Then the Prophet by this form of speaking aggravates the sin of the people of Israel, that is, when he says that they bowed the head before the work of their oven hands.

He afterwards subjoins, *I will take away thy groves*. The groves, we know, formed a part of their idolatry: they are therefore mentioned here as an addition by the Prophet. For he speaks not simply of trees, but refers to the wicked practices of the people: for wherever there were high and lofty trees, they thought that something divine was hid under their shade; hence their superstition. When therefore the Prophet mentions groves, it must be understood of vicious and false modes of worship; for they thought that those places acquired a sort of sanctity from the trees; as they also thought that they were nearer to God when they were on a hill. We hence see that this verse is to be connected with the last; as though the Prophet had said, that the Church could not be in safety and recover her pristine vigor, without being well cleansed from all the filth of idolatry. For we indeed know that some pious kings when they took away idols did not cut down the groves; and this exception to their praise is added, that they worshipped God, but that the high places were suffered to stand. We see that the Holy Spirit does not fully commend those kings who did not destroy the groves. — Why? Because they were the materials of corruption. And further, had the Jews been really penitent, they would have exterminated those groves by which they had so shamefully abused and profaned the worship of God. The sum of the whole then is, that when God shall have well cleansed his Church and wiped away all its stains, he will then become the unfailing preserver of its safety. ^{F94}

He afterwards subjoins, And *I will destroy thy enemies*. עֲרִיךְ, *orik*, may be rendered, enemies, and many so render it: but others translate it, cities; and the word, cities, would be the most suitable, were it not that the Prophet had previously mentioned cities. I do not therefore see that it would be proper to render it here by this term. The word עֲרִיךְ, *orik*, then, ought doubtless to be rendered, thy enemies. Let us inquire why the prophet says, that the enemies of the Church were to be destroyed. This sentence ought to be thus explained, (I leave the former ones, and take only this the last,) *And I will demolish thy groves from the midst of thee, that I may destroy thine enemies*: ^{F95} the copulative is then to be considered as a

final particle; and this meaning is the most suitable; as though the Prophet had said, as I have already often stated, that the door was closed against God, so that he could bring no aid to his Church, and deliver it from enemies, as long as it held to false confidence, and was attached to the filth of idolatry, which was still worse. “That I may then destroy thine enemies, it is necessary first that every thing in thee that prevents or hinders my favor should be taken away and removed.”

At last he adds, *And I will execute vengeance in wrath and in fury*. He goes on with what I have just said of enemies; “I will then execute vengeance in wrath and in fury on the nations”. Here God mentions his wrath and his fury, that the faithful might feel greater confidence, that though now their enemies poured forth grievous threatening, yet this could not prevent God from aiding his people. — How so? Because if we compare the wrath and fury of God with all the terrors of men, doubtless the threats of men would appear as nothing but smoke. We now perceive the Prophet’s meaning in these words. And he says in the last place, I will execute vengeance on the nations who have not heard. Almost all interpreters join the relative, אֲשֶׁר, *asher* with the preceding word, גּוֹיִם, *guim*, — I will then take vengeance on the *nations who have not heard*, that is, who have been rebellious against God: not to hear, as they explain, is obstinately to despise the power of God, and not to be moved by his promises or by his threatenings. But a fitter sense may perhaps be elicited, if we refer אֲשֶׁר, *asher*, to vengeance, — I will then execute vengeance on the nations which they have not heard, that is, I will take vengeance on all the nations in a manner unheard of and incredible: and by nations, he understands indiscriminately all the enemies of the Church, as we have elsewhere seen.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou so kindly invites us to thyself, and promises that thy aid should never be wanting to us, provided we do not close the door against thee, — O grant, that though many earthly benefits may be granted to us, we may not yet trust in them and depart from thee, but, on the contrary, recomb on thy grace only: and then should it happen to us to be deprived of all helps, that our minds may be awakened, and that we may thus learn to hasten to thee, may nothing impede our course, that we may not, with the greatest haste and ardent desire, long to

deliver up and devote ourselves wholly to thee, that we may be made safe under the care and protection of thy only-begotten Son, whom thou hast appointed to be the guardian of our safety. Amen.

LECTURE NINETY-THIRD

CHAPTER 6

<330601> MICAH 6:1-2	
1. Hear ye now what the LORD saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice.	1. Audite nunc (vel, quaeso) quod dicit Jehova, — Surge, litiga coram montibus, et colles audiant vocem tuam:
2. Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel.	2. Audite montes disceptationem Jehovae, et fortia undamenta terrae: quia disceptatio Jehovae cum populo suo, et cum Israele contendet.

Here the Prophet avowedly assumes that the people were sufficiently proved guilty; and yet they resisted through a hardness the most obdurate, and rejected all admonitions without shame, and without any discretion. He is therefore commanded to direct his discourse to the mountains and to the hills; for his labor had now for a long time been useless as to men. The meaning then is that when the Prophet had spent much labor on the people and derived no fruit, he is at length bidden to call the mountains and the hills to bear their testimony to God; and thus before the elements is made known and proved the ungodliness and the obstinacy of the people. But before he relates what had been committed to him, he makes a preface, in order to gain attention.

Hear ye what Jehovah says. The Prophets are wont, on very serious subjects, to make such a preface as is here made by Micah: and it is indeed sufficiently evident from the passage, that he has here no ordinary subject for his teaching, but that, on the contrary, he rebukes their monstrous stupidity; for he had been addressing the deaf without any advantage. As then the Prophet was about to declare no common thing, but to be a witness of a new judgment, — this is the reason why he bids them to be

unusually attentive. Hear, he says, what Jehovah saith. What is it? He might have added, “Jehovah has very often spoken to you, he has tried all means to bring you to the right way; but as ye are past recovery, vengeance alone now remains for you: he will no more spend labor in vain on you; for he finds in you neither shame, nor meekness, nor docility.” The Prophet might have thus spoken to them; but he says that another thing was committed to his charge by the Lord, and that is, to contend or to plead before the mountains. And this reproach ought to have most acutely touched the hearts of the people: for there is here an implied comparison between the mountains and the Jews; as though the Prophet said, — “The mountains are void of understanding and reason, and yet the Lord prefers to have them as witness of his cause rather than you, who exceed in stupidity all the mountains and rocks.” We now then perceive the design of God.

Some take mountains and hills in a metaphorical sense for the chief men who then ruled: and this manner of speaking very frequently occurs in Scripture: but as to the present passage, I have no doubt but that the Prophet mentions mountains and hills without a figure; for, as I have already said, he sets the hardness of the people in opposition to rocks, and intimates, that there would be more attention and docility in the very mountains than what he had hitherto found in the chosen people. And the particle **אִתּוֹ**, *at*, is often taken in the sense of *before*: it means also with; but in this place I take it for **לְפָנָיו**, *lamed*, before or near, as many instances might be cited. But that this is the meaning of the Prophet it is easy to gather from the next verse, when he says —

Hear, ye mountains, the controversy of Jehovah, ^{F96} *how? and ye strong foundations of the earth,* he says. He speaks here no more of hills, but summons the whole world; as though he said, “There is not one of the elements which is not to bear witness respecting the obstinacy of this people; for the voice of God will penetrate to the farthest roots of the earth, it will reach the lowest depths: these men will at the same time continue deaf.” And he says not, the Lord threatens you, or denounces judgment on you; but Jehovah has a contention with his people. We now then see that there is no metaphor in these words; but that the Prophet merely shows how monstrous was the stupor of the people, who profited nothing by the celestial doctrine delivered to them, so that the very mountains and the whole machinery of earth and heaven, though destitute

of reason, had more understanding than these men. And it is not unusual with the Prophets, we know, to turn their discourse to mute elements, when there remains no hope of success from men. But our Prophet does not abruptly address mountains and hills as Isaiah does, (^{<230102>}Isaiah 1:2,) and as also Moses had done,

‘Hear, ye heavens, what I shall say, let the earth hear the words of my mouth,’ (^{<053201>}Deuteronomy 32:1.)

but he prefaces his discourse by saying, that it had been specially commanded to him to summon the mountains and hills to God’s judgment. By saying then, “Hear ye what Jehovah saith,” he prepares as I have said, the Jews to hear, that they might know that something uncommon and altogether unusual was to be announced, — that the Lord, in order more fully to convict them of extreme impiety, intended to plead his cause before the mountains.

Arise, then, and plead before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. What sort of voice was this? They who think that the judges are here figuratively pointed out may be easily refuted; for Micah in the next verse mentions the substance of this pleading, namely that the Lord expostulated with his people. We hence see that God had no contention with the mountains, but that, on the contrary, the mountains were summoned, that they might understand God’s pleading, not against them, but against the people. Hear then, ye mountains, Jehovah’s controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth, that is, the very rocks. There is nothing so hard in the world, he says, that shall not be inane to hear; for this pleading shall reach the lowest depths. *Jehovah then has a controversy with his people, and he will plead, or contend, with Israel.* It follows —

^{<330603>}**MICAH 6:3**

3. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.

3. Popule mi, quid feci tibi? Et in quo exhibui tibi molestiam? Testificare contra me.

Here God, in the first place, offers to give a reason, if he was accused of any thing. It seems indeed unbecoming the character of God, that he should be thus ready as one guilty to clear himself: but this is said by way of

concession; for the Prophet could not otherwise express, that nothing that deserved blame could be found in God. It is a personification, by which a character; not his own, is ascribed to God. It ought not therefore to appear inconsistent, that the Lord stands forth here, and is prepared to hear any accusation the people might have, that he might give an answer, *My people! what have I done?* By using this kind expression, my people, he renders double their wickedness; for God here descends from his own elevation, and not only addresses his people, in a paternal manner, but stands as it were on the opposite side, and is prepared, if the people had anything to say, to give answer to it, so that they might mutually discuss the question, as it is usually done by friends. Now the more kindly and indulgently the Lord deals with his people, the more enhanced, as I have said, is their sin.

He says first, *What have I done to thee?* that is, what hast thou to accuse me with? He adds *In what have I caused trouble^{F97} to thee?* or, In what have I been troublesome to thee? Testify, he says, against me. This testifying was to be made to the mountains and hills; as though he said, “I am ready to plead my cause before heaven and earth; in a word, before all my creatures.” Some render the passage, “Answer me:” and ענה, *one*, is also to answer; but the context requires the former meaning; for God conceded so much liberty to the Jews, that they might bring forward against him any fault they had to allege. *Testify*, he says, *against me*; that is, there are witnesses present; make public now thy case by stating particulars, I am ready for the defense. We hence see the truth of what I have before stated, — that a character, not his own is ascribed to God: but this is done by way of concession. He afterwards adds —

<330604> MICAH 6:4	
4. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.	4. Certe (vel, quia, vel, nempe quod ascendere te feci e terra AEgypti, et ex domo servorum redemi te, et misi coram te Mosen, Aaron, et Mariam.

God, having testified that he had in nothing been troublesome to the people, now states with how great and with how many benefits he had bound them to himself. But we may prefer taking the words as

explanatory and somewhat ironical that he records his benefits in the place of trouble or vexation; though, in my judgment, it is better to read the two clauses apart. *I have brought thee*, he says, *from the land of Egypt*, from that miserable bondage; and then he says, *I have redeemed thee*.^{F98} By the word, redeem, he expresses more clearly and more fully illustrates his kindness. Then he adds, *I have set over thee as leaders Moses*, and Aaron, and Miriam, the sister of them both. Benefits, we know, are often accompanied with injuries; and he who obliges another destroys all his favor, when he turns kindness as it often happens, into reproach. It is hence frequently the case, that he who has been kind to another brings so serious an injury, that the memory of his kindness ought not to continue. God mentions here these two things, — that he had conferred vast benefits on the people, — and yet that he had in nothing been burdensome to them; as though he said “Many are those things which I can, if necessary, on my part bring forward, by which I have more than a hundred times made thee indebted to me; now thou canst not in thy turn bring anything against me; thou canst not say that I have accompanied my benefits with wrongs, or that thou hast been despised, because thou were under obligations to me, as it is often the case with men who proudly domineer, when they think that they have made others bound to them. I have not then thought proper to accompany my great favors with anything troublesome or grievous to thee.” We now understand why the Prophet expressly mentions these two things, — that God had in nothing been vexatious to his people, — and that he had brought them up from the land of Egypt.

That redemption was so great, that the people ought not to have complained, had it been the will of God to lay on their shoulders some very heavy burdens: for this answer might have been ever readily given, — “Ye have been delivered by me; ye owe to me your life and your safety. There is therefore no reason why any thing should be now burdensome to you; for the bondage of Egypt must have been bitterer to you than hundred deaths; and I redeemed you from that bondage.” But, as the Lord had treated his redeemed people so kindly and so humanely, yea, with so much indulgence, how great and how intolerable was their ingratitude in not responding to his great kindness? We now more fully understand the Prophet’s meaning in these words.

I have made thee to ascend, he says, from Egypt; and then, I have redeemed thee. He goes on, as we have said, by degrees. He afterwards

adds, I have sent before thy face Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. God means here that it had not been a momentary kindness; for he continued his favor towards the Jews when he set over them Moses and Aaron, and Miriam, which was an evidence of his constant care, until he had completed his work of delivering them. For Moses was a minister of their deliverance in upholding civil order, and Aaron as to the priesthood and spiritual discipline. With regard to Miriam, she also performed her part towards the women; and as we find in Exodus 15, she composed a song of thanksgiving after passing through the Red Sea: and hence arose her base envy with regard to Moses; for being highly praised, she thought herself equal to him in dignity. It is at the same time right to mention, that it was an extraordinary thing, when God gave authority to a woman, as was the case with Deborah that no one may consider this singular precedent as a common rule. It now follows —

<330605> MICAH 6:5

5. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.

5. Popule mi, recordare nunc (vel, quaeso, est eadem particula) quid cogitaverit Balak, rex Moab, et quid responderit ei Balaam, filius Beor, a Sittim usque ad Gilgal, ut cognosceres (vel, cognoscas) justitias Jehovae.

God briefly records here what happened in the desert, — that the people had need of some extraordinary help in addition to the many benefits which he had conferred on them. For though the people lived safely in the desert as to the Egyptians, though they were fed by manna and water from the rock flowed for them, though the cloud by day protected them from the heat of the sun, and the pillar of fire shone on them during the night, yet the stream of God’s mercy seemed to have been stopped when Balaam came forth, who was a Prophet, and then, as one armed with celestial weapons, fought against the people and opposed their deliverance. Now, had God permitted Balaam to curse the people, what could have taken place, but that they must have been deprived of all their blessings? This is the reason why the Prophet specifically refers to this history, — that the cursing of Balaam was miraculously turned into a blessing, even through

the secret purpose of God. Micah might indeed have referred to all those particulars by which God could have proved the ingratitude of the people; but he deemed it sufficient to touch on the fact of their redemption, and also to mention by the way this extraordinary instance of God's kindness.

Remember, he says, *what Balak devised*, that is, how crafty was his counsel: for the verb עָזַר, *iots*, is to be taken here in a bad sense, and is very emphatical; as though the Prophet had said, that there was more danger in this fraud than in all the violence of enemies; for Balak could not have done so much harm, had he prepared a great army against the Israelites, as by hiring a Prophet to curse the people. For certain it is, that though Balaam was an impostor and full of deceits, as it is probable that he was a man given to profane superstitions, he was yet endued with the gift of prophecy. This was the case no doubt; and we know that God has often so distributed the gifts of his Spirit, that he has honored with the prophetic office even the ungodly and unbelieving: for it was a special gift, distinct from the grace of regeneration. Balaam then was a Prophet. Now when Balak saw that he was unequal in power to oppose the people, he thought of this expedient — to get some Prophet to interpose for the purpose of exciting the wrath of God against the people. This is the reason why it is here said, Remember what Balak consulted against thee; that is, “Thou were then in the greatest danger, when a Prophet came, hired for the purpose, that he might in God's name pronounce on thee a curse.”

It may be asked, Whether Balaam could really curse the people of Israel? The answer is easy: the question here is not what might have been the effect, without God's permission; but Micah here regards only the office with which Balaam was honored and endued. As then he was God's Prophet, he could have cursed the people, had not God prevented him. And no doubt Balak was wise enough to know, that the Israelites could not be resisted by human power, and that, therefore, nothing remained for him but the interposition of God; and as he could not bring down God from heaven, he sent for a Prophet. God puts his own power in his word, — as God's word resided in Balaam, and as he was, as it were, its depository, it was no wonder that Balak thought that he would become the conqueror of the people of Israel, provided they were cursed by Balaam's mouth; for this would have been as it were, the announcement of God's wrath.

He now subjoins, *And what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him.* There is here shown, on the one hand, a danger, because Balaam was craftier than all the other enemies of the people, for he could have done more by his artifice than if he had armed against them the whole world: here then was the danger. But, on the other hand, we know what he answered; and it is certain that the answer of Balaam did not proceed from himself, but, on the contrary, from the Spirit of God. As Balaam spoke by the secret influence of the Spirit, contrary to the wish of his own heart, God thus proved that he was present at that very time, when the safety of the people was endangered. Think, then, or remember, what Balaam answered; as though he said, — “Balaam was very nigh cursing thee, for his mouth was opened: for he had sold himself to an ungodly king, and nothing could have pleased him more than to have poured forth many anathemas and many curses: but he was constrained to bless your fathers. What did this mean? Did not the wonderful favor of God shine forth in this instance?” We now perceive the Prophet’s design, and what a large meaning there is in these words.

He afterwards adds generally, *From Shittim even to Gilgal.* This is not connected with the last clause; for Balaam did not follow the people from Shittim to Gilgal; but a verb is to be understood,^{F99} as though he said, — “Thou knowest what things happened to thee from Shittim to Gilgal, from the beginning to the end; at the time when thou didst enter the wilderness, thou hadst begun to provoke the wrath of God.” And we know that even in Shittim the Israelites fell away into idolatry; and that defection, in a manner, alienated them from God. Hence God shows here that he, in his goodness and mercy, had contended with the ungodly ways of the people even to Gilgal; that is, “Thou hast never ceased to provoke me.” We indeed know that the people continually excited against themselves the displeasure of God, and that their defections were many and various. In short, then the Prophet shows that God had so mercifully dealt with the people, that he had, in a most astonishing manner, overcome their wickedness by his goodness.

He at length subjoins, *That thou mayest know the righteousnesses of Jehovah.* By righteousnesses he means acts of kindness, as the sense of the word is in many other passages: for the righteousness of God is often taken not only for uprightness, but also for the faithfulness and truth which he manifests towards his people. It betokens therefore the relation between God and his Church, whenever the word, righteousness, is to be

understood in this sense. *That thou mayest then know the righteousness of Jehovah*; that is, that experience itself may prove to thee how faithful, how beneficent, how merciful has God ever been towards your race. ^{F100}

Since then the righteousness of God was conspicuous, the people must surely have been mute, and had nothing for which they could justly expostulate with God: what remained, but that their extreme impiety, fully detected before heaven and earth and all the elements, exposed them to his judgment? It now follows —

<330606> MICAH 6:6-8	
6. Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?	6. In quo occurram Jehovae? Incurvabo me coram Deo excelso? Occurramne ei in holocaustis? In vitulis anniculis?
7. Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?	7. An complacitum erit Jehovae in millibus arietum? In decem millibus vallium olei (vel, pinguedinis?) An dabo primogenitum peccatum meum (hoc est, piaculum peccati mei? Fructum ventris mei, piaculum sceleris animae mea?
8. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?	8. Indicavit tibi, homo, quid bonum; et quid Jehova quaerit abs te nisi facere iudicium et deligere clementiam (vel, bonitatem,) et humiliari ut ambules cum Deo tuo.

The Prophet now inquires, as in the name of the people, what was necessary to be done: and he takes these two principles as granted, — that the people were without any excuse, and were forced to confess their sin, — and that God had hitherto contended with them for no other end and with no other design, but to restore the people to the right way; for if his purpose had only been to condemn the people for their wickedness, there would have been no need of these questions. But the Prophet shows what has been often stated before, — that whenever God chides his people, he opens to them the door of hope as to their salvation, provided those who

have sinned repent. As this then must have been well known to all the Jews, the Prophet here asks, as with their mouth, what was to be done.

He thus introduces them as inquiring, *With what shall I approach Jehovah, and bow down before the high God?*^{F101}

Shall I approach him with burnt-offerings,^{F102} *with calves of a year old?*

But at the same time there is no doubt, but that he indirectly refers to that foolish notion, by which men for the most part deceive themselves; for when they are proved guilty, they indeed know that there is no remedy for them, except they reconcile themselves to God: but yet they pretend by circuitous courses to approach God, while they desire to be ever far away from him. This dissimulation has always prevailed in the world, and it now prevails: they see that they whom God convicts and their own conscience condemns, cannot rest in safety. Hence they wish to discharge their duty towards God as a matter of necessity; but at the same time they seek some fictitious modes of reconciliation, as though it were enough to flatter God, as though he could be pacified like a child with some frivolous trifles. The Prophet therefore detects this wickedness, which had ever been too prevalent among them; as though he said, — “I see what ye are about to say; for there is no need of contending longer; as ye have nothing to object to God, and he has things innumerable to allege against you: ye are then more than condemned; but yet ye will perhaps say what has been usually alleged by you and always by hypocrites, even this, — ‘We wish to be reconciled to God, and we confess our faults and seek pardon; let God in the meantime show himself ready to be reconciled to us, while we offer to him sacrifices.’” There is then no doubt, but that the Prophet derided this folly, which has ever prevailed in the hearts of men: they ever think that God can be pacified by outward rites and frivolous performances.

He afterwards adds, *He has proclaimed to thee what is good.* The Prophet reproves the hypocrisy by which the Jews willfully deceived themselves, as though he said, — “Ye indeed pretend some concern for religion when ye approach God in prayer; but this your religion is nothing; it is nothing else than shamelessly to dissemble; for ye sin not either through ignorance or misconception, but ye treat God with mockery.” — How so? “Because the Law teaches you with sufficient clearness what God requires from you; does it not plainly enough show you what is true reconciliation? But ye close your eyes to the teaching of the Law, and in the meantime pretend

ignorance. This is extremely childish. God has already proclaimed what is good, *even to do judgment, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God.*” We now perceive the design of the Prophet.

As then he says here, With what shall I appear before God? we must bear in mind, that as soon as God condescends to enter into trial with men, the cause is decided; for it is no doubtful contention. When men litigate one with another, there is no cause so good but what an opposite party can darken by sophistries. But the Prophet intimates that men lose all their labor by evasions, when God summons them to a trial. This is one thing. He also shows what deep roots hypocrisy has in the hearts of all, for they ever deceive themselves and try to deceive God. How comes it that men, proved guilty, do not immediately and in the right way retake themselves to God, but that they ever seek windings? How is this? It is not because they have any doubt about what is right except they willfully deceive themselves, but because they dissemble and willfully seek the subterfuges of error. It hence appears that men perversely go astray when ever they repent not as they ought, and bring not to God a real integrity of heart. And hence it also appears that the whole world which continues in its superstitions is without excuse. For if we scrutinize the intentions of men, it will at length come to this, — that men carefully and anxiously seek various superstitions, because they are unwilling to come before God and to devote themselves to him, without some dissembling and hypocrisy. Since it is so, certain it is, that all who desire to pacify God with their own ceremonies and other trifles cannot by any pretext escape. What is said here is at the same time strictly addressed to the Jews, who had been instructed in the teaching of the Law: and such are the Papists of this day; though they spread forth specious pretenses to excuse their ignorance, they may yet be refuted by this one fact, — that God has prescribed clearly and distinctly enough what he requires: but they wish to be ignorant of this; hence their error is at all times wilful. We ought especially to notice this in the words of the Prophet; but I cannot proceed farther now.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast made known to us thy Law, and hast also added thy Gospel, in which thou callest us to thy service, and also invites us with all kindness to partake of thy

grace, — O grant, that we may not be deaf, either to thy command or to the promises of thy mercy, but render ourselves in both instances submissive to thee and so learn to devote all our faculties to thee, that we may in truth avow that a rule of a holy and religious life has been delivered to us in thy law, and that we may also firmly adhere to thy promises, lest through any of the allurements of the world, or through the flatteries and crafts of Satan thou shouldst suffer our minds to be drawn away from that love which thou hast once manifested to us in thine only-begotten Son and in which thou daily confirmest us by the teaching of the Gospel, until we at length shall come to the full enjoyment of this love in that celestial inheritance, which has been purchased for us by the blood of thy only Son. Amen.

LECTURE NINETY-FOURTH

We have seen in the last lecture that hypocrites inquire how God is to be pacified, as though they were very solicitous about the performance of their duty; and that in the meantime these are mere disguises; for by circuitous windings they turn here and there, and never wish to come directly to God. The way might have been easily known by them; but they closed their eyes, and at the same time pretended that they had some concern for religion. And this is also very commonly the case in our day; and common experience, if any one opens his eyes, clearly proves this, — that the ungodly, who deal not sincerely with God, profess a very great concern, as though they were wholly intent on serving God, and yet turn aside here and there, and seek many bypaths, (*diverticula*.) that they may not be constrained to present themselves before God. We have already seen, that this false pretense is fully exposed, inasmuch as God has enough, and more than enough, demonstrated in his Law, what he approves and what he requires from men. Why then do hypocrites, as still uncertain, make the inquiry? It is because they are willfully blind at mid-day; for the doctrine of the Law ought to have been to them as a lamp to direct their steps; but they smother this light, yea, they do what they can wholly to extinguish it: they ask, as though perplexed, how can we pacify God?

But it ought also to be observed, (for the Prophet says, *Shall I give my first-born, and the fruit of my loins, as an expiation for my soul?*^{F103}) that hypocrites will withhold nothing, provided they are not to devote themselves to God. We see the same thing under the Papacy at this day; they spare no expense, nor even the greatest toils: provided the ungodly have always a freedom to live in sin, they will easily grant to God all other things. For through a false conceit they make a sort of agreement with God: if they mortify themselves, and toil in ceremonies, and if they pour forth some portion of their money, if they sometimes deprive nature of its support, if with fastings and by other things, they afflict themselves, they think that by these means they have fully performed their duties. But these are frivolous trifles; for in the meantime they consider themselves exempt from the duty of obeying God. Being yet unwilling to be regarded as alienated from God, they, at the same time, obtrude on him their

meritorious works, to prevent his judgment, and to exempt themselves from the necessity of doing the principal thing, that which he especially requires — to bring a sincere heart. Thus then hypocrites wish to divide things with God, that they may remain within such as they are; and they spread forth outwardly many frivolous things for the purpose of pacifying him. And this is the reason why the Prophet says now, *Shall I give my first-born?* for hypocrites wish to appear as though they were burning with the greatest zeal, — “Rather than that God should remain angry with me, I would not spare the life of my first-born; I would rather be the executioner of my own son: in short, nothing is so valuable to me, which I would not be really to part with, that God may be propitious to me.” This indeed is what they boast with their mouth; but at the same time they will not offer their heart as a sacrifice to God: and as they deal dishonestly with God, we see that all is nothing but dissimulation.

If any one objects, and says, — that the other rites, of which the Prophet speaks here, had been enjoined by God’s Law, the answer is easy; but I shall not now but briefly touch on what I have elsewhere more largely handled: The Prophet denies, that sacrifices avail any thing for the purpose of propitiating God. This may seem inconsistent with the teaching of the Law, but in fact it altogether agrees with it. God indeed wished sacrifices to be offered to him; and then this promise was always added, *Iniquity shall be atoned*. But the object must be noticed; for God did not command sacrifices, as though they were of themselves of any worth; but he intended to lead the ancient people by such exercises to repentance and faith. It was therefore his design to remind the Jews that they did no good, except they themselves became sacrifices; and it was also his will that they should look to the only true sacrifice, by which all sins are expiated. But hypocrites, like falsifiers of documents, abused the command of God, and adulterated the sacrifices themselves. It was then a profane sacrilege for them to think that God would be propitious to them, if they offered many oxen and calves and lambs. It was the same thing as if one asked the way, and after having known it, rested quietly and never moved a foot. God had shown the way, by which the Jews might come to repentance and faith: and they ought to have walked in it; but they wickedly trifled with God; for they thought that it would be a satisfaction to his justice, if they only performed outward rites. Whenever then the Prophets in God’s name repudiate sacrifices, the abuse, by which God’s Law was corrupted, is ever

to be considered, that is, when the Jews brought sacrifices, only, and had no respect to the end in view, and did not exercise themselves in repentance and faith. It is for this reason that our Prophet declares, that all sacrifices were of no account before God, but were vain things: they were so, when they were separated from their right end.

He then says that God had shown by his Law what is good; and then he adds what it is, *to do justice, to love mercy*, or kindness, *and to be humbled before God*. It is evident that, in the two first particulars, he refers to the second table of the Law; that is *to do justice, and to love mercy*.^{F104} Nor is it a matter of wonder that the Prophet begins with the duties of love; for though in order the worship of God precedes these duties, and ought rightly to be so regarded, yet justice, which is to be exercised towards men, is the real evidence of true religion. The Prophet, therefore, mentions justice and mercy, not that God casts aside that which is principal — the worship of his name; but he shows, by evidences or effects, what true religion is. Hypocrites place all holiness in external rites; but God requires what is very different; for his worship is spiritual. But as hypocrites can make a show of great zeal and of great solicitude in the outward worship of God, the Prophets try the conduct of men in another way, by inquiring whether they act justly and kindly towards one another, whether they are free from all fraud and violence, whether they observe justice and show mercy. This is the way our Prophet now follows, when he says, that God's Law prescribes *what is good*, and that is, *to do justice* — to observe what is equitable towards men, and also to perform the duties of mercy.

He afterwards adds what in order is first, and that is, *to humble thyself to walk with God*:^{F105} it is thus literally, “And to be humble in walking with thy God.” No doubt, as the name of God is more excellent than any thing in the whole world, so the worship of him ought to be regarded as of more importance than all those duties by which we prove our love towards men. But the Prophet, as I have already said, was not so particular in observing order; his main object was to show how men were to prove that they seriously feared God and kept his Law: he afterwards speaks of God's worship. But his manner of speaking, when he says, that men ought to be humble, that they may walk with their God, is worthy of special notice. Condemned, then, is here all pride, and also all the confidence of the flesh: for whosoever arrogates to himself even the least thing, does, in a manner, contend with God as with an opposing party. The true way then of

walking with God is, when we thoroughly humble ourselves, yea, when we bring ourselves down to nothing; for it is the very beginning of worshipping and glorifying God when men entertain humble and low opinion of themselves. Let us now proceed —

<330609> **MICAH 6:9**

9. The LORD'S voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.

9. Vox Jehovae ad civitatem (vel, ad expergefaciendum) clamat (ad verbum, clamabit;) et vir intelligentiae videbit nomen tuum: audite virgam, et quis testificetur eam.

The Prophet complains here that he and other teachers did but little, though their cry resounded and was heard by the whole people. He therefore says, that the *voice* of God *cried*; as though he had said that there was no excuse for ignorance, for God had indiscriminately exhorted them all to repentance. Now, since what was taught was common to them all, the Prophet deplors their perverseness, for very few were attentive; and the fable was sung, according to the proverb, to the deaf. We must then notice the word *cry*; *the voice* of God, he says, *crieth*. God did not whisper in the ear of one or two, but he designed his voice to be heard by all from the least to the greatest. The Prophets then did cry loud enough, but there were no ears to hear them.

We may take the word לעיר, *lair*, in two ways. עיר, *oir*, means a city. But some derive it from עור, *our*, and render it as if it were written להעיר, *laeoir*. If ה, *he* is put in, it must be rendered, *To rouse*; and the letter ה, *he*, may be concealed under the point chamets; and this sense would be the most suitable, *The voice of Jehovah cries to arouse* or awaken; that is though the people are torpid, and as it were overpowered with sleep, for they indulged themselves in their sins; yet the voice of God ought to be sufficient to arouse them all: however sleepy they might have been, there was yet power enough in the doctrine of the Law, which the Prophet daily proclaimed. But still this voice, by which the whole people ought to have been awakened, was not heard!

The man of understanding, he says *will see thy name*. The word תושיה, *tushie*, means properly understanding, as it is clear from many other passages; but the Prophet means that there was a very small number who were teachable; and he calls them men of understanding. At the same time, he indirectly reproves the sottishness of the people, though they all boasted that they were wise, and boasted also that they were the learners of the Law. The Prophet shows here by implication, that understanding was a rare thing among that people; for few hearkened to the voice of God. And thus we see what his object was; for he wished to touch the Jews to the quick, that they might acknowledge that they were without mind and understanding, because they had hardened themselves against God, so that his voice did not reach their hearts. He therefore shows that they were all besides themselves; for had they any right understanding, they would have hearkened to God speaking to them, as they were his disciples. What indeed could have been more strange, nay more inhuman, than for men to reject the doctrine of their salvation, and to turn aside from hearing even God himself? Thus the madness of the people was reprov'd; for though the voice of God sounded in the ears of them all, it was not yet listened to.

If one prefers reading, *In the city*, then no doubt the Prophet means, that the voice of God was proclaimed through all the cities: for to confine it, as some interpreters do, to Jerusalem, or to Samaria, appears frigid. We must then understand a change of number, and take city for any large concourse of people; as though he had said, that there was no city in which God did not cry and yet that there were ears no where.

It afterwards follows, *Shall see thy name*. Some render it, Shall fear,^{F106} as though it was from איר, *ira*; but it comes on the contrary from ראה, *rae*; and rules of grammar will not allow it to be viewed otherwise. And the Prophet speaks in a striking manner, when he says, that the *intelligent man seeth the name of God*. For whence proceeded the contempt of wicked men, so that they disregarded the voice of God, except from this — that his majesty had no effect on them; that is, they did not acknowledge that they had to do with God? For if they really understood what I have said, — that God spoke to them, his majesty would have immediately come to view, it would have arrested all their thoughts. God then would have constrained even the most heedless to fear him, had it not been, that they imagined the voice which sounded in their ears was that of man. Significantly then does the Prophet say, that it was the act of singular

prudence to see the name of God, that is to understand from whom the doctrine proceeded. For as soon as we hearken to God, his majesty, as I have said, must so penetrate all our thoughts, as to humble us before him, and to constrain us to do him homage. The contempt then of spiritual doctrine, and also the perverseness of ungodly men, proceed from this, — that they see not the name of God, that they understand not that it is his name.

He afterwards adds, *Hear ye the rod, and him who proclaims it to you.* By rod he means threatening; as though he said, — “Your arrogance in mocking God shall not go unpunished, as though his voice were an empty sound: there is then no reason for you to deceive yourselves with the hope of impunity; for God will avenge the contempt of his word.” Now the Prophet’s design was, to denounce an approaching vengeance on those who came not willingly to God, and received not his word with genuine docility of mind. Whenever, then, men despise the voice of God, as though it proceeded only from a mortal being, on such Micah denounces an impending vengeance; for the contempt of his word is a thing intolerable to God. This is the reason why he immediately adds, after having complained of the contempt of his word, that vengeance was not afar off; *Hear ye then the rod, and who declares or testifies concerning it.*

This last clause ought to be especially noticed; for the ungodly are not terrified when God declares that he will be an avenger, because they think not that they must give an account of their life, or they look only on mortal man, “Ah! who speaks? Is he indeed our God? Is he armed with celestial power? Do we not see a mortal man and one like ourselves?” We daily see that the ungodly do thus cast away every fear, and willfully harden themselves against God’s judgments. It is not then without reason that the Prophet bids the Jews seriously to consider *who testifies* of the rod; as though he said, — “I indeed confess that I am a mortal man, but remember who has sent me; for I go not forth as a private individual, nor have I presumptuously intruded into this office; but I am armed with God’s command; nay, God himself speaks through my mouth. If then ye despise me, the Lord is present, who will vindicate his own commands for he will not suffer himself to be despised in his servants though they may be contemptible according to the flesh, he will yet have the reverence which it deserves to be paid to his word.” We now perceive the real meaning of the Prophet. It now follows —

<330610> **MICAH 6:10-11**

10. Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable?

10. Adhuc an sunt in domo impii thesauri impietatis? Et modius macilentus deterestabilis (vel, provocans iram?)

11. Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?

11. An justificabo stateras impietatis, et sacculum ponderum doli?

Interpreters differ as to the word **עָשׂוּ**, *eash*: some think that it ought to be read **עָשׂוּהוּ**, *eaish*, with an addition of two letters, and render it, “Is it yet man?” But this would render the passage abrupt. Others translate, “Is there yet fire?” As though it was **עָשׂוּ**, *ash*; and they suppose that wealth, wickedly and unjustly got, is so called, because it consumes itself. But as this is against what grammar requires, I am more inclined to take their view, who think that **עָשׂוּהוּ**, *eash*, is to be taken here for **עֵשׂוּהוּ**, *eish*,^{F107}, *aleph* being put for jod: and they rightly consider that the sentence is to be read as a question, *Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the ungodly?* If this view be approved, then we must consider the Prophet as proposing a question respecting a thing really monstrous, — How can it be that treasures, gathered by plunder and wickedness, still remain with you, since ye have been so often warned, and since God daily urges you to repentance? How great is your hardness, that no fear of God lays hold on your minds? But the meaning would not be unsuitable were we to regard God as a Judge examining them concerning a matter unknown, Are there still the treasures of impiety in the house of the ungodly? that is, “I will see whether the ungodly and wicked hide their treasures:” for God often assumes the character of earthly judges; not that any thing escapes his knowledge, but that we may know that he is not precipitant in deciding a question. This view, then, is by no means inappropriate, that is, that God here assumes the character of an earthly judge, and thus speaks, “I will see whether there are still treasures concealed by the ungodly; I will search their houses; I will know whether they have as yet repented of their crimes.” thus, then, may be understood the words of the Prophet, *Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the ungodly?* For God,

as I have already said, shows that he would know respecting the plunders and the various kinds of cruelty which they had exercised.

He then adds, Is there *the bare measure*, that is, a measure less than it ought to be, *which is detestable?*^{F108} Then he says, *Shall I justify?*, etc.^{F109} This verse is connected with the last, and is added as an explanation. For God having come forth as a Judge, now shows what sort of Judge he is, even one who is not biased by favor, who does not change his judgment, who shows no respect of persons. But men, for the most part, greatly deceive themselves, when they transform God according to their own will, and promise to themselves that he will be propitious to them, provided they only make false pretensions to him. God then here declares, that he differs widely from earthly judges, who now incline to one side and then to another, who are changeable, and often deviate from the right course: but, on the contrary, he says here, *Shall I justify wicked balances? shall I justify weights of fraud*, or deceitful? that is, “Shake off all those delusions by which ye are wont to deceive yourselves; for I do not change either my nature or my purpose; but according to the true teaching of my Law, I will punish all the wicked without any respect of persons: wherever wickedness and iniquity are found, there punishment will be inflicted.”

We now then understand how these two verses harmonize together. God shows that he will be a judge, and then, that he differs from men, who often change, as it has been said, in their decisions.

I will mention another meaning, which will perhaps be preferred by some. The question, after the manner of the Hebrews, may be taken as an affirmation, as though he had said, that within a short time, (for עֹד, *oud*, means sometimes a short time,) the treasures of iniquity would not be found, for they would be taken away: then follows a confirmation, for frauds and robberies by false measures and deceitful weights could not escape God’s judgment. The meaning then would be, that as God must necessarily, according to his own office, punish thefts, it cannot be that he will suffer men, who cheat by false weights to continue always unpunished. It now follows —

<330612> MICAH 6:12

12. For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

12. Quia (sic enim verito; nam qui putant esse relationum, frigide exponunt, cujus divites ejus impleverunt rapinis; potius est, quia; nam אֲשֶׁר saepe loco causalis particulae accipitur, quia ergo) divites ejus impleverunt (vel seipsos, vel domos suas, subaudiendum est) חֲמָסָה, rapina (vel, violentia); et incolae ejus locuti sunt fallaciam, et lingua eorum fallax (vel, fraudulenta) in ore ipsorum.

The Prophet means that the people were so given to avarice and plunder, that all the riches they had heaped together had been got by iniquitous robberies or by wicked gain. He now addresses the citizens of Jerusalem: for though iniquity then prevailed through the whole of Judea, there was yet a reason why he should distinctly accuse the inhabitants of Jerusalem; for they must have led the way by their example, and they were also worse in wickedness than the rest of the people: they were at least more obstinate, as they daily heard God's Prophets.

Hence he says, *her rich men gather not their wealth* except by violence. It is indeed certain, that the rich were not then alone guilty before God; but this evil has too much prevailed, that the more liberty any one possesses, the more he employs it to do wrong. Those indeed who have not the power refrain, not because they are not inclined to do harm, but because they are as it were restrained; for poverty is often a bridle to men. As then the rich could spread their snares, as they had power to oppress the poor, the Prophet addresses his words to them, not that the rest were without fault or guilt, but because iniquity was more conspicuous in the rich, and that, because their wealthy as I have already said, gave them more power.

He afterwards extends his address to all the inhabitants, *They all*, he says, *speak falsehood*, that is, they have no sincerity, no uprightness; they are wholly given to frauds and deceits. *And their tongue is false in their mouth.* This mode of speaking seems apparently absurd; for where can the tongue be except in the mouth? It appears then a sort of redundancy, when he says that their tongue was deceitful in their mouth. But it is an emphatical

mode of speaking, by which the Hebrews mean, that men have falsehoods in readiness as soon as they open their mouth. It is then the same as though the Prophet had said, that no pure word and free from guile could come from them, for as soon as they opened their mouth, falsehoods instantly came forth; their tongue was fraudulent, so that none could expect from these men any truth or faithfulness. — How so? Because as soon as they began to speak, they instantly discovered some guile, there was ever in readiness some falsehood to circumvent the simple.

We now then see that not a few men were summoned before God’s tribunal, but that all without exception were condemned; as though the Prophet had said, that there was no more any integrity in the city, and that corruptions prevailed everywhere, for all were intent on deceiving one another. It follows —

<330613> MICAH 6:13-14	
13. Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins.	13. Et ego etiam affligam te percutiundo, et te disperdam super peccatis tuis (secundum tua scelera.)
14. Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword.	14. Tu comedes, et non satiaberis; et dejectio tua in medio tui; et apprehendes, et non servabis; et quod servaveris gladio tradam.

God, after having declared that he would be the Judge of the people, speaks now more clearly of their punishment. He says therefore that he was armed with vengeance: for it often happens, when a judge, even one who hates wickedness, is not able to punish, for he dreads the fierceness of those whom he thinks himself unequal to restrain. Hence God intimates here, that there will not be wanting to him a power to punish the people, *I will afflict thee*, he says, *by striking* or wounding *thee*; for so some render the words. ^{F110} The sum of what is said is, — that nothing would be an obstacle to prevent God from inflicting punishment on the people, for there would be no want of power in his case. There is therefore no reason

for men to promise themselves any escape when God ascends his tribunal; for were they fortified by all possible means they could not ward off the hand of God.

And he points out what sort of punishment it would be; and he mentions even two kinds in this verse. He says first, *Thou shalt eat, and shalt not be satisfied*. One of God's plagues, we know, is famine: and so the Prophet here declares, that the people would be famished, but not through the sterility of the fields. God indeed brings a famine in two ways: now the land yields no fruit; the corn withers, or, being smitten with hail, gives no fruit; and thus God by the sterility of the fields often reduces men to want and famine: then another mode is adopted, by which he can consume men with want, namely, when he breaks the staff of bread, when he takes away from bread its nourishing virtues so that it can no more support men, whatever quantity they may swallow; and this is what experience proves, if only we have eyes to observe the judgments of God. We now see the meaning of this clause, when he says, *Thou shalt eat, and shalt not be satisfied*; as though he said, "I can indeed, whenever it pleases me, deprive you of all food; the earth itself will become barren at my command: but that ye may more clearly understand that your life is in my hand, a good supply of fruit shall be produced, but it shall not satisfy you. Ye shall then perceive that bread is not sufficient to support you; for by eating ye shall not be able to derive from bread any nourishment."

He then adds, *And thy dejection^{F11} shall be in the midst of thee*; that is, though no man from without disturb or afflict thee yet thou shalt pine away with intestine evils. This is the real meaning; and interpreters have not sufficiently considered what the Prophet means, through too much negligence. But the passage ought to be noticed: for the Prophet, after having threatened a famine, not from want, but from the secret curse of God, now adds, *Thy dejection shall be in the midst of thee*; that is "Though I should rouse against thee no enemies, though evidences of my wrath should not appear, so as to be seen at a distance, yea, though no one should disturb thee, yet thy dejection, thy calamity, shall be in the midst of thee, as though it were cleaving to thy bowels; for thou shalt pine away through a hidden malady, when God shall pronounce his curse on thee."

He now subjoins another kind of punishment, *Thou shalt take hold,^{F12} but shalt not deliver, and what thou shalt deliver, I will give up to the sword*.

Some read, “A woman shall lay hold,” that is, conceive seed, “and shall not preserve it;” and then, “though she may bring forth in due time, I will yet give up what may be born to the sword.” But this meaning is too strained. Others apply the words to fathers, “Thou, father, shalt lay hold;” that is thou shalt endeavor to preserve thy children, “and thou shalt not preserve them.” But I wonder that interpreters have thus toiled in vain in a matter so simple and plain. For he addresses here the land, or he addresses the city: as though he said, “The city shall take hold,” or embrace, as every one does who wishes to preserve or keep any thing; for what we wish to keep safe, we lay hold on it, and keep it as it were in our arms; “*and what thou shalt preserve, I will give up to the sword*: thou wilt try all means to preserve thyself and thy people, but thou shalt not succeed: thou shalt then lose all thy labor, for though thou shouldest preserve some, yet the preserved shall not escape destruction.”

If any one prefers to refer what is said to women, with regard to conception, as the third person of the feminine gender is used, let him have his own opinion; for this sense may certainly be admitted, that is, that the Lord would render the women barren, and that what they might bring forth would be given up to the slaughter, inasmuch as the Lord would at length destroy with the sword both the parents and their children.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou canst find in us cause enough to execute not only one kind of vengeance, but innumerable kinds of vengeance, so as to destroy us at length altogether, — O grant, that we may of our own accord anticipate thy judgment, and with true humility so abhor ourselves, that there may be kindled in us a genuine desire to seek what is just and right, and thus endeavor to devote ourselves wholly to thee, that we may find thee to be propitious to us: and since we in so many ways offend thee, grant, that in true and sincere faith we may raise up all our thoughts and affections to thy only-begotten Son, who is our propitiation, that thou being appeased, we may lay hold on him, and remain united to him by a sacred bond, until thou at length gatherest us all into that celestial kingdom, which he has procured for us by his own blood. Amen.

LECTURE NINETY-FIFTH

<330615> MICAH 6:15

15. Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine.

15. Tu seres, et non metes; tu calcabis (*vel*, premes) oleum, et non unges te oleo; et mustum, et non bibes vinum.

The Prophet adds another kind of punishment, which was to follow the calamity threatened in the last verse. He had said, that those who escaped would at length be destroyed by the sword; he says now, that the whole land would become a prey to enemies: and he took his words from Moses; for it was usual with the prophets, when they wished to secure greater authority to themselves, to quote literally the curses contained in the Law, as in the present instance: see Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26. Now it is well known, that God denounced this punishment, with others, on the people, — that when they sowed their fields, another would reap, — that when they cultivated with great labor their vineyards, others would become the vintagers. The meaning is that whatever fruit the land produced, would come into the hands of enemies, for all things would be exposed to plunder. Now it is a very grievous thing, when we see not only our provisions consumed by enemies, but also the fruit of our labor; which is the same as though they were to drink our blood: for the labor of man is often compared to blood, for labor occasions perspiration. It now follows

<330616> MICAH 6:16

16. For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

16. Et observata sunt edicta Amri, et omne opus domus Ahab; et ambulabitis consiliis eorum, ut tradam te in excidium (vel, vastitatem,) et incolas ejus in sibilum; et opprobrium populi mei portabis.

Some read the words in the future tense, “And they will observe the statutes of Omri,” etc., and gather this meaning, — that the Prophet now foresees by the Spirit, that the people would continue so perverse in their sins, as to exclude every hope that they could be reformed by any punishments. The meaning then would be, “The Lord has indeed determined to punish sharply and severely the wickedness of this people; but they will not repent; they will nevertheless remain stupid in their obstinacy, and go on in their superstitions, which they have learned from the kings of Israel.” There is however another view, and one more generally approved and that is, — that the Jews, having forsaken God, and despised his Law, had turned aside to the superstitions of the kingdom of Israel. Hence he says, that *observed were the decrees of Omri, and every work of the house of Ahab*. Omri was the father of Ahab, who was made king by the election of the soldiers, when Zimri, who had slain the king, was rejected. When Omri bought Samaria, he built there a city; and to secure honor to it, he added a temple; and hence idolatry increased. Afterwards his son Ahab abandoned himself to every kind of superstition. Thus matters became continually worse. Hence the Prophet, by mentioning here king Omri and his posterity, (included in the words, “the house of Ahab”) clearly means, that the Jews who had purely worshipped God, at length degenerated, and were now wholly unlike Israelites, as they had embraced all those abominations which Omri and his son Ahab had devised. True religion as yet prevailed in the tribe of Judah, though the kingdom of Israel was become corrupt, and filthy superstitions had gained the ascendancy: but in course of time the Jews became also implicated in similar superstitions. Of this sin the Prophet now accuses them; that is, that they made themselves associates with the Israelites: *Observed*^{F113} *then are the*

edicts of Omri, and the whole work of the house of Ahab: Ye walk, he says, (the future here means a continued act, as often elsewhere,) *ye walk in their counsels.*

It must be observed, that the Prophet here uses respectable terms, when he says that חֻקֵי, *chekut*, statutes or decrees, were observed; and when he adds, “the counsels” of the kings of Israel: but yet this is in no way stated as an excuse for them; for though men may not only be pleased with, but also highly commend, their own devices, yet the Lord abominates them all. The Prophet no doubt designedly adopted these words, in order to show that those pretenses were frivolous and of no account, which superstitious men adduce, either to commend or to excuse their own inventions. They ever refer to public authority, — “This has been received by the consent of all; that has been decreed; it is not the mistake of one or two men; but the whole Church has so determined: and kings also thus command; it would be a great sin not to show obedience to them.” Hence the Prophet, in order to show how puerile are such excuses, says, “I indeed allow that your superstitions are by you honorably distinguished, for they are approved by the edicts of your kings, and are received by the consent of the many, and they seem not to have been inconsiderately and unadvisedly, but prudently contrived, even by great men, who were become skillful through long experience.” But how much soever they might have boasted of their statutes and counsels, and however plausibly they might have referred to prudence and power in order to disguise their idolatries, yet all those things were of no account before God. By counsels, the Prophet no doubt meant that false kind of wisdom which always shines forth in the traditions of men; and by statutes, he meant the kingly authority.

We hence see that it is a vain thing to color over what is idolatrous, by alleging power on the one hand in its favor, and wisdom on the other. — How so? Because God will not allow dishonor to be done to him by such absurd things; but he commands us to worship him according to what is prescribed in his Word.

And now a denunciation of punishment follows, *That I should deliver thee to desolation*, and its inhabitants, etc. There is a change of person; the Prophet continually addresses the land, and under that name, the people, — that I should then deliver thee to exile, or desolation, *and thine*

inhabitants to hissing. It is a quotation from Moses: and by *hissing* he means the reproach and mockery to which men in a miserable state are exposed.

At last he adds, *Ye shall bear the reproach of my people*. Some take the word, people, in a good sense, as though the Prophet had said here, that God would punish the wrongs which the rich had done to the distressed common people; but this view, in my judgment, is too confined. Others understand this by the reproach of God's people, — that nothing would be more reproachful to the Jews, than that they had been the people of God; for it would redound to their dishonor and disgrace, that they, who had been honored by such an honorable name, were afterwards given up to so great miseries. But the passage may be otherwise explained: we may understand by the people of God the Israelites; as though the Prophet said, “Do ye not perceive how the Israelites have been treated? Were they not a part of my people? They were descendants from the race of Abraham as well as you; nor can you boast of a higher dignity: They were then equal to you in the opinion of all; and yet this privilege did not hinder my judgment, did not prevent me from visiting them as they deserved.” Such a view harmonizes with the passage: but there is, as I think, something ironical in the expression, “my people;” as though he said, “The confidence, that ye have been hitherto my people, hardens you: but this false and wicked boasting shall increase your punishment; for I will not inflict on you an ordinary punishment, as on heathens and strangers; but I shall punish your wickedness much more severely; for it is necessary, that your punishment should bear proportion to my favor, which has been so shamefully and basely despised by you.” Hence, by the reproach of God's people, I understand the heavier judgments, which were justly prepared for all the ungodly, whom God had favored with such special honor, as to regard them as his people: for the servant, who knew his master's will, and did it not, was on that account more severely corrected, ^{F114 <421247>} Luke 12:47. Let us now proceed —

CHAPTER 7

<330701> MICAH 7:1-2

1. Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: *there is* no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe fruit.

1. Vae mihi (*alii deducunt a לל*, ululare meum; *sed est particula dolentis apud Hebraeos*; Vae mihi ergo,) quia fui sicut collectiones aestatis (*sic est ad verbum*.) et sicuti racemi vindemiae; nullus botrus ad comedendum; maturos fructus (*vel, primitias frugum*) desideravit anima mea.

2. The good *man* is perished out of the earth: and *there is* none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.

2. Periit humanus (*vel, mansuetus*) e terra, et rectus in hominibus nemo est; et omnes sanguinibus insidiantur, quisque fratrem suum venatur reti (*alii, ad perniciem*; et ךה, *etiam Hebraeis interdum est occisio.*)

The meaning of the first verse is somewhat doubtful: some refer what the Prophet says to punishment; and others to the wickedness of the people. The first think that the calamity, with which the Lord had visited the sins of the people, is bewailed; as though the Prophet looked on the disordered state of the whole land. But it may be easily gathered from the second verse, that the Prophet speaks here of the wickedness of the people, rather than of the punishment already inflicted. I have therefore put the two verses together, that the full meaning may be more evident to us.

Woe then to me! Why? I am become as gatherings. Too free, or rather too licentious is this version, — “I am become as one who seeks to gather summer-fruits, and finds none;” so that being disappointed of his hope, he burns with desire. This cannot possibly be considered as the rendering of the Prophet’s words. There is indeed some difficulty in the expressions: their import, however, seems to be this, — that the land, which the Prophet undertakes here to represent and personify, was like to a field, or

a garden, or a vineyard, that was empty. He therefore says, that the land was stripped of all its fruit, as it is after harvest and the vintage. So by *gatherings* we must understand the collected fruit. Some understand the gleanings which remain, as when one leaves carelessly a few clusters on the vines: and thus, they say, a few just men remained alive on the land. But the former comparison harmonizes better with the rest of the passage, and that is, that the land was now stripped of all its fruit, as it is after the harvest and the vintage. *I am become* then *as the gatherings of summer*, that is, as in the summer, when the fruit has been already gathered; *and as the clusters of the vintage*, that is when the vintage is over.^{F115}

There is no cluster, he says to eat. The Prophet refers here to the scarcity of good men; yea, he says that there were no longer any righteous men living. For though God had ever preserved some hidden seed, yet it might have been justly declared with regard to the whole people, that they were like a field after gathering the corn, or a vineyard after the vintage. Some residue, indeed, remains in the field after harvest, but there are no ears of corn; and in the vineyard some bunches remain, but they are empty; nothing remains but leaves. Now this personification is very forcible when the Prophet comes forth as though he represented the land itself; for he speaks in his own name and person, *Woe is to me*, he says, *for I am like summer-gatherings!* It was then the same thing, as though he deplored his own nakedness and want, inasmuch as there were not remaining any upright and righteous men.

In the second verse he expresses more clearly his mind, *Perished*, he says, *has the righteous*^{F116} *from the land, and there is none upright*^{F117} *among men.* Here now he does not personify the land. It was indeed a forcible and an emphatic language, when he complained at the beginning, that he groaned as though the land was ashamed of its dearth: but the Prophet now performs the office of a teacher, *Perished*, he says, *has the righteous from the land; there is no one upright among men; all lay in wait for blood; every one hunts his brother as with a net.* In this verse the Prophet briefly shows, that all were full both of cruelty and perfidy, that there was no care for justice; as though he said, In vain are good men sought among this people; for they are all bloody, they are all fraudulent. When he says, that they *all did lay in wait for blood*, he no doubt intended to set forth their cruelty, as though he had said, that they were thirsting for blood. But

when he adds, that each did lay in wait for their brethren, he alludes to their frauds or to their perfidy.

We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet: and the manner he adopts is more emphatical than if God, in his own name, had pronounced the words: for, as men were fixed, and as though drowned, in their own carelessness, the Prophet introduces here the land as speaking, which accuses its own children, and confesses its own guilt; yea, it anticipates God's judgment, and acknowledges itself to be contaminated by its own inhabitants, so that nothing pure remained in it. It follows —

<330703> **MICAH 7:3**

3. That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.

3. Super malitia manuum suarum ad beneficiendum; princeps postulat, et iudex in mercede (ego transfero ad verbum,) et magnus loquitur pravitatem animae suae ipse; et complicant (vel, ut alii vertunt, confirmant; sed proprie est complicari; et metaphora apte convenit contextui, ut statim videbimus.)

This verse is properly addressed to the judges and governors of the people, and also to the rich, who oppressed the miserable common people, because they could not redeem themselves by rewards. The Prophet therefore complains, that corruptions so much prevailed in judgments, that the judges readily absolved the most wicked, provided they brought bribes. The sum of what is said then is, that any thing might be done with impunity, for the judges were venal. This is the Prophet's meaning.

But as interpreters differ, something shall be said as to the import of the words. **על הרע כפיים**, *ol ero caphim*, *For the evil of their hands* to do good. Some give this explanation, "Though they are openly wicked, yet they make pretenses, by which they cover their wickedness:" and the sense would be this, — that though they had cast aside every care for what was right, they yet had become so hardened in iniquity, that they wished to be deemed good and holy men; for in a disordered state of things the wicked always show an iron front, and would have silence to be observed respecting their shameful deeds. Some interpreters therefore think that the

Prophet here complains, that there was now no difference between what was honorable and base, right and wrong; for wicked men dared so to disguise their iniquities, that they did not appear, or, that no one ventured to say any thing against them. Do you, however, examine and consider, whether what the Prophet says may be more fitly connected together in this way, *That they may do good for the wickedness of their hands*, that is, to excuse themselves for the wickedness of their hands, they agree together; *for the prince asks, the judge is ready to receive a bribe*. Thus, the rich saw that exemption might have been got by them, for they had the price of redemption in their hands: they indeed knew that the judges and princes could be pacified, when they brought the price of corruption. And this is the meaning which I approve, for it harmonizes best with the words of the Prophet. At the same time, some give a different explanation of the verb **להיטיב**, *laeithib*, that is that they acted vigorously in their wickedness: but this exposition is frigid. I therefore embrace the one I have just stated, which is, — that corruptions so prevailed in the administration of justice, that coverings were ready for all crimes; for the governors and judges were lovers of money, and were always ready to absolve the most guilty, but not without a reward. *For the wickedness then of their works, that they may do good*, that is, that they may obtain acquittance, *the prince only asks*; he examines not the case, but only regards the hand; *and the judge*, he says, *judges for reward*: the judges also were mercenary. They did not sit to determine what was right and just; but as soon as they were satisfied by bribes, they easily forgave all crimes; and thus they turned vices into virtues; for they made no difference between white and black, but according to the bribe received. ^{F118}

This view is consistent with what the Prophet immediately subjoins, *The great*, he says, *speaks of the wickedness of his soul, even he*. By the great, he does not mean the chief men, as some incorrectly think, but he means the rich, who had money enough to conciliate the judges. They then who could bring the price of redemption, dared to boast openly of their wickedness: for so I render the word **הגור**, *eut*, as it cannot be suitable to translate it here, corruption. *Speak then of the wickedness of his soul does the great*; there was then nothing, neither fear nor shame, to restrain the rich from doing wrong. — How so? For they knew that they had to do with mercenary judges and could easily corrupt them. They hence dared to *speak of the wickedness of their soul*: they did not cloak their crimes, as it

is the case when some fear of the Law prevails, when justice is exercised: but as no difference was made between good and evil, the most guilty boasted openly of his wickedness. And the pronoun **אני**, *eva*, he himself, is also emphatical; and this has not been observed by interpreters. *He* then *himself* speaks of the wickedness of his soul; he did not wait until others accuse him of doing wrong, but he shamelessly dared to glory in his crimes; for impunity was certain, as he could close the mouth of the judges by bringing a bribe. *Speak then of the wickedness of his soul does he himself.*
 F119

And further, *they fold up* wickedness; which means, that raging cruelty prevailed, because the governors, and those who wished to purchase liberty to sin, conspired together; as though they made ropes, and thus rendered firm their wickedness. For the great man, that is, the rich and the monied, agreed with the judge, and the judge with him; and so there was a collusion between them. It hence happened, that wickedness possessed, as it were, a tyrannical power; for there was no remedy. We now apprehend the real design of the Prophet, at least as far as I am able to discover. It now follows —

<330704> MICAH 7:4	
4. The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity.	4. Bonus inter eos quasi paliurus, rectus prae spineto (aliquid subaudiendum est, asperior est spineto;) dies speculatorum tuorum, visitatio tua venit; tunc erit confusio ipsorum (vel, perplexitas, ut alii vertunt.)

The Prophet confirms what he had previously said, — that the land was so full of every kind of wickedness, that they who were deemed the best were yet thorns and briers, full of bitterness, or very sharp to prick; as though he said, “The best among them is a thief; the most upright among them is a robber.” We hence see, that in these words he alludes to their accumulated sins, as though he said, “The condition of the people cannot be worse; for iniquity has advanced to its extreme point: when any one seeks for a good or an upright man, he only finds thorns and briers; that is, he is instantly pricked.” But if the best were then like thorns, what must

have been the remainder? We have already seen that the judges were so corrupt that they abandoned themselves without feeling any shame to any thing that was base. What then could have been said of them, when the Prophet compares here the upright and the just to thorns; yea, when he says, that they were rougher than briars? Though it is an improper language to say, that the good and the upright^{F120} among them were like briars; for words are used contrary to their meaning, as it is certain, that those who inhumanely pricked others were neither good nor just: yet the meaning of the Prophet is in no way obscure, — that there was then such license taken in wickedness, that even those who retained in some measure the credit of being upright were yet nothing better than briars and thorns. There is then in the words what may be deemed a concession.

He then adds, *The day of thy watchmen, thy visitation comes*. He here denounces the near judgment of God, generally on the people, and especially on the rulers. But he begins with the first ranks and says *The day of thy watchmen*; as though he said, “Ruin now hangs over thy governors, though they by no means expect it.” *Watchmen* he calls the Prophets, who, by their flatteries, deceived the people, as well as their rulers: and he sets the Prophets in the front, because they were the cause of the common ruin. He does not yet exempt the body of the people from punishment; nay, he joins together these two things, — the visitation of the whole people, and the day of the watchmen.

And justly does he direct his discourse to these watchmen, who, being blind, blinded all the rest; and who, being perverted, led astray the whole people. This is the reason why the Prophet now, in an especial manner, threatens them; but, as I have already said, the people were not on this account to be excused. There may seem indeed to have been here a fair pretense for extenuating their guilt: the common people might have said that they had not been warned as they ought to have been; nay, that they had been destroyed through delusive falsehoods. And we see at this day that many make such a pretense as this. But a defense of this kind is of no avail before God; for though the common people are blinded, yet they go astray off their own accord, since they lend a willing ear to impostors. And even the reason why God gave loose reins to Satan as well as to his ministers, and why he gives, as Paul says, (<⁵³⁰²¹¹>2 Thessalonians 2:11,) power to delusion, is this, — because the greater part of the world ever seeks to be deceived. The denunciation of the Prophet then is this, — that

as the judges and the Prophets had badly exercised their office, they would be led to the punishment which they deserved, for they had been, as it has been elsewhere observed, the cause of ruin to others: in the meantime, the common people were not excusable. The vengeance of God then would overtake them and from the least to the greatest, without any exemption. *Thy visitation then comes.*

He afterwards speaks in the third person, *Then shall be their confusion*, or perplexity, or they shall be ashamed. The Prophet here alludes indirectly to the hardness of the people; for though the Prophets daily threatened them, they yet remained all of them secure; nay, we know that all God's judgments were held in derision by them. As then the faithful teachers could not have moved wicked men either with fear or with shame, the Prophet says, *Then confusion shall come to them*; as though he said, "Be hardened now as much as ye wish to be, as I see that you are stupid, yea, senseless, and attend not to the word of the Lord; but the time of visitation will come, and then the Lord will constrain you to be ashamed, for he will really show you to be such as ye are; and he will not then contend with you in words as he does now; but the announced punishment will divest you of all your false pretenses; and he will also remove that waywardness which now hardens you against wholesome doctrine and all admonitions."

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that seeing that we are born in a most corrupt age, in which such a license is taken to indulge in wickedness, that hardly a spark of virtue appears, — O grant, that we may yet continue upright in the midst of thorns; and do thou so constantly keep us under the guidance of thy Word, that we may cultivate true piety, and also what is just towards our neighbors: and as there is in us no power to preserve ourselves safe, grant that thy Son may so protect us by the power of the Holy Spirit, that we may continue to advance towards the end of our course, until we be at length gathered into that celestial kingdom, which he has procured for us by his own blood. Amen.

LECTURE NINETY-SIXTH

<330705> MICAH 7:5-6	
5. Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.	5. Ne fidatis amico, ne speretis in consiliario (vel, duce;) ab ea quae dormit in sinu tuo custodi aperturas oris tui:
6. For the son dishonoreth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.	6. Quia filius contumelia afficit patrem, filia surgit contra matrem suam, nurus contra socrum suam; inimici viri domestici ejus (homines domus ejus, ad verbum.)

The Prophet pursues the subject we discussed yesterday, — that liberty, in iniquity, bad arrived to its highest point, for no faithfulness remained among men; nay, there was no more any humanity; for the son performed not his duty towards his father, nor the daughter-in-law towards her mother-in-law; in short, there was then no mutual love and concord. He does not here speak of that false confidence, by which many deceive themselves, who rely on mortals, and transfer to them the glory which belongs to God. Those therefore without any reason, philosophize here, who say, that we ought not to trust in men; for this was not the design of the Prophet. But our Prophet complains of his times according to the tenor of Ovid's description of the iron age, who says -

*“—A guest is not safe from his host;
 Nor a brother-in-law from a son-in-law; and brotherly love is rare:
 A husband seeks the death of his wife, and she, of her husband;
 Cruel stepmothers mingle the lurid poison;
 The son, before the day, inquires into the years of his father.”^{F121}*

So also our Prophet says, that there was no regard to humanity among men; for the wife was ready to betray her husband, the son treated his father with reproach; in short, they had all forgotten humanity or natural affection. We now then understand what the Prophet means by saying,

Trust not a friend; ^{F122} that is, if any one hopes for any thing from a friend, he will be deceived; for nothing can be found among men but perfidy.

Put no faith in a counselor. So I render the word אֱלֹוֹף, *aluph*; some translate it, an elder brother; but there is no necessity to constrain us to depart from the proper and true meaning of the word. As then the Prophet had spoken of an associate or a friend, so he now adds a counselor. And it proves what he had in view, when he says in the next clause, that no enemies are worse than domestics. We hence see that the Prophet simply means, that the men of his age were not only avaricious and cruel to one another, but that without any regard to human feelings the son rebelled against his father, and thus subverted the whole order of nature; So that they had none of those affections, which seem at the same time to be incapable of being extinguished in men. Let us now proceed —

<330707> **MICAH 7:7**

7. Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

7. Ego autem ad Jehovam respiciam, expectabo ad Deum salutis meae; exaudiet me Deus meus.

The Prophet points out here the only remedy, to preserve the faithful from being led away by bad examples and that is, to fix their eyes on God, and to believe that he will be their deliverer. Nothing is more difficult than to refrain from doing wrong, when the ungodly provoke us; for they seem to afford us a good reason for retaliation. And when no one injures us, yet custom is deemed almost a law: thus it happens that we think that to be lawful which is sanctioned by the manners and customs of the age; and when success attends the wicked, this becomes a very strong incentive. Thus it happens, that the faithful can hardly, and with no small difficulty, keep themselves within proper bounds: when they see that wickedness reigns everywhere, and that with impunity; and still more, when they see the abettors of wickedness increasing in esteem and wealth, immediately the corrupt lust of emulation creeps in. But when the faithful themselves are provoked by injuries, there seems then to be a just reason for doing wrong; for they say that they willfully do harm to no one, but only resist an injury done to them, or retaliate fraud with fraud: this they think is

lawful. The Prophet, in order to prevent this temptation, bids the faithful to look to God. The same sentiment we often meet with in Psalm 119: its import is, that the faithful are not to suffer themselves to be led away by bad examples, but to continue ever obedient to God's word, however great and violent the provocations they may receive. Let us now consider the words of the Prophet.

To Jehovah, he says, *will I look*. The verb צָפָה, *tsaphe*, properly means to look on, to behold; (*speculari*;) it is sometimes taken in the sense of expecting; but I am inclined to retain its proper meaning, *I will look*, he says, *on God*; that is, I will do the same as though the only true God were before my eyes. How indeed does it happen that even the good indulge themselves while living among the wicked and ungodly, except that they are too much occupied with things around them? If then we desire to maintain integrity, while the world presents to us nothing but examples of sin, let us learn to pass by these temptations as with closed eyes. This may be done, if we direct our eyes to God alone. *I will look*, he says, *to Jehovah*.

He then adds, *I will wait for the God of my salvation*. The Prophet says nothing new here, but only explains more clearly the last clause, defining the manner of the looking of which he had spoken; as though he said, — “Patiently will I bear, while God helps me:” for when the wicked harass us on every side, we shall no doubt soon turn away our eyes from Gods except we be armed with patience. And how comes patience, unless we be fully persuaded that God will be our deliverer, when the suitable time shall come? We now perceive the intention of the Prophet. He shows that the godly cannot otherwise continue constant in their integrity, except they turn their eyes to the only true God. Then he adds, that they cannot be preserved in this contemplation, unless they wait patiently for God, that is, for his help.

And he calls him *the God of his salvation*; by which he intimates that, relying on his word, he thus perseveres in enduring injuries: for it cannot be but that every one will submit himself to God, and surrender himself to be protected by him, if this truth be first fixed in his mind — that God will never forsake his own people. This then is the reason why he calls him *the God of his salvation*. But this title must be referred to his present circumstances, as though he said, — “Though God's hand does not now

appear to help or to bring me aid, I yet feel assured of his favor, and I know that my salvation is secured by it.”

He then adds, *Hear me will my God*. He here confirms what we have already said, — that, being supported by the promises of God, he thus composes his mind to patience; for patience would often vanish or would be shaken off by temptations, unless we were surely persuaded that God provides for our salvation, and that we shall not hope in him in vain. Nor is it to no purpose that he says, that God was his God. He was one of his people; and this seems to have been the common privilege of all the Jews: yet the Prophet no doubt connects God with himself here in a peculiar manner; for men in general had fallen away into ungodliness. They all indeed gloried in the name of God, but absurdly and falsely. Hence the Prophet intimates, that he was under his protection in a manner different from the rest: for when any one allows himself the liberty of doing evil, he, at the same time, renounces God and his protection. Therefore, the Prophet no doubt alludes indirectly to the irreligion of the people. For though the vain boasting, that they had been adopted by God, that they were the holy race of Abraham, was everywhere in the mouth of all, yet hardly one in a hundred had any regard for God. But it is also of importance to notice, that the Prophet, by saying, *Hear me will God*, gives a testimony, at the same time, respecting his own faith, — that he would always apply to God for help, and exercise himself in prayer whenever necessity urged him; for God hears not except when he is called upon. The Prophet then recommends here, by his example, an attention to prayer.

Now this verse shows to us in general that there is no excuse for us if we suffer ourselves to be led away, as it is daily the case, by bad examples. And then to look to God is especially needful, when all excesses of wickedness prevail in the world: when the lusts of men become the rule and the law, we ought then to renounce in a manner the society of men, that they may not implicate us in their wickedness. They, therefore, who allege for themselves the examples of others, employ a frivolous excuse, as many do in the present day, who set up the shield of custom: though they are clearly condemned by the word of God, yet they think it a sufficient defense, that they follow others. But we see how frivolous is this confidence; for the Prophet no doubt prescribes here a law for all the children of God as to what they ought to do, when the devil tempts them

to sin by the bad examples and shameful deeds of the majority. Let us go on —

<330708> **MICAH 7:8**

8. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.

8. Ne gaudeas de me, inimica mea; quia ceciderim, surgam (vel, quamvis ceciderim, surgam;) quum sedebo in tenebris, Jehova erit lux mihi.

Here the Prophet assumes the character of the Church and repels a temptation, which proves very severe to us in adversities; for there is not so much bitterness in the evil itself, as in the mockery of the wicked, when they petulantly insult us and deride our faith. And to noble minds reproach is ever sharper than death itself: and yet the devil almost always employs this artifice; for when he sees that we stand firm in temptations, he suborns the wicked and sharpens their tongues to speak evil of us and to wound us with slanders. This is the reason why the Prophet directs his discourse now to the enemies of the Church. But as God calls the Church his spouse, and as she is described to us under the character of a woman, so also he compares here the enemies of the holy people to a petulant woman. As, therefore, when there is emulation between two women, she, who sees her enemy pressed down by evils and adverse events, immediately raises up herself and triumphs; so also the Prophet says respecting the enemies of the Church; they sharpened their tongues, and vomited forth their bitterness, as soon as they saw the children of God in trouble or nearly overwhelmed with adversities. We now then understand the design of the Prophet, — that he wished to arm us, as I have said, against the taunts of the ungodly, lest they should prevail against us when God presses us down with adversities, but that we may stand courageously, and with composed and tranquil minds, swallow down the indignity.

Rejoice not over me, he says, *O my enemy*. Why not? He adds a consolation; for it would not be enough for one to repel with disdain the taunts of his enemy; but the Prophet says here, *Rejoice not, for should I fall, I shall rise*; or though I fall, I shall rise: and the passage seems to

harmonize better when there is a pause after Rejoice not over me; and then to add, *Though I fall, I shall rise, though I sit in darkness, Jehovah shall be a light to me.*^{F123} The Prophet means, that the state of the Church was not past hope. There would be ample room for our enemies to taunt us, were it not that this promise cannot fail us, — seven times in the day the just falls, and rises again, (<202416> Proverbs 24:16.) — How so? For God puts under him his own hand. We now perceive the meaning of this passage. For if God deprived us of all hope, enemies might justly deride us, and we must be silent: but since we are surely persuaded that God is ready at hand to restore us again, we can boldly answer our enemies when they annoy with their derisions; though I fall, I shall rise: “There is now no reason for thee to triumph over me when I fall; for it is God’s will that I should fall, but it is for this end — that I may soon rise again; and though I now lie in darkness, yet the Lord will be my light.”

We hence see that our hope triumphs against all temptations: and this passage shows in a striking manner, how true is that saying of John, — that our faith gains the victory over the world, (<620504> 1 John 5:4.) For when sorrow and trouble take possession of our hearts, we shall not fail if this comes to our mind — that God will be our aid in the time of need. And when men vomit forth their poison against us, we ought to be furnished with the same weapons: then our minds shall never succumb, but boldly repel all the taunts of Satan and of wicked men. This we learn from this passage.

Now, from what the Prophet says, *Though I fall, I shall rise again*, we see what God would have us to expect, even a happy and joyful exit at all times from our miseries; but on this subject I shall have to speak more copiously a little farther on. As to the latter clause, *When I sit in darkness, God will be my light*, it seems to be a confirmation of the preceding sentence, where the Prophet declares, that the fall of the Church would not be fatal. But yet some think that more is expressed, namely, that in the very darkness some spark of light would still shine. They then distinguish between this clause and the former one, which speaks of the fall and the rise of the faithful, in this manner, — that while they lie, as it were, sunk in darkness, they shall not even then be without consolation, for God’s favor would ever shine on them. And this seems to be a correct view: for it cannot be that any one will expect the deliverance of which the Prophet speaks, except he sees some light even in the thickest darkness, and

sustains himself by partaking, in some measure, of God’s goodness: and a taste of God’s favor in distresses is suitably compared to light; as when one is cast into a deep pit, by raising upward his eyes, he sees at a distance the light of the sun; so also the obscure and thick darkness of tribulations may not so far prevail as to shut out from us every spark of light, and to prevent faith from raising our eyes upwards, that we may have some taste of God’s goodness. Let us proceed —

<330709> MICAH 7:9	
<p>9. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.</p>	<p>9. Iram Jehovahe feram, quia peccavi ei, donec disceptet causam meam et faciet iudicium meum (vel, asserat jus meum;) educet me in lucem, cernam justitiam ejus.</p>

Here the Church of God animates and encourages herself to exercise patience, and does so especially by two arguments. She first sets before herself her sins, and thus humbles herself before God, whom she acknowledges to be a just Judge; and, in the second place, she embraces the hope of the forgiveness of her sins, and from this arises confidence as to her deliverance. By these two supports the Church sustains herself, that she fails not in her troubles, and gathers strength, as I have already said, to endure patiently.

First then he says, *The wrath^{F124} of Jehovah will I bear, for sinned have I against him.* This passage shows, that when any one is seriously touched with the conviction of God’s judgment, he is at the same time prepared to exercise patience; for it cannot be, but that a sinner, conscious of evil, and knowing that he suffers justly will humbly and thankfully submit to the will of God. Hence when men perversely glamour against God, or murmur, it is certain that they have not as yet been made sensible of their sins. I allow indeed that many feel guilty who yet struggle against God, and fiercely resist his hand as much as they can, and also blaspheme his name when he chastises them: but they are not touched hitherto with the true feeling of penitence, so as to abhor themselves. Judas owned indeed that he had sinned, and freely made such confession, (<402703> Matthew 27:3.) Cain

tried to cover his sin, but the Lord drew from him an unwilling confession, (^{<010413>}Genesis 4:13.) They did not yet repent; nay, they ceased not to contend with God; for Cain complained that his punishment was too heavy to be borne; Judas despaired. And the same thing happens to all the reprobate. They seemed then to have been sufficiently convinced to acknowledge their guilt, and, as it were, to assent to the justice of God's judgment; but they did not really know their sins, so as to abhor themselves, as I have said, on account of their sins. For true penitence is ever connected with the submission of which the Prophet now speaks. Whosoever then is really conscious of his sins, renders himself at the same time obedient to God, and submits himself altogether to his will. Thus repentance does ever of itself lead to the bearing of the cross; so that he who sets himself before God's tribunal allows himself to be at the same time chastised, and bears punishment with a submissive mind: as the ox, that is tamed, always takes the yoke without any resistance, so also is he prepared who is really touched with the sense of his sins, to bear any punishment which God may be pleased to inflict on him. This then is the first thing which we ought to learn from these words of the Prophet, *The wrath of Jehovah will I bear, for sinned have I against him.*

We also learn from this passage, that all who do not patiently bear his scourges contend with God; for though they do not openly accuse God, and say that they are just, they do not yet ascribe to him his legitimate glory, by confessing that he is a righteous judge. — How so? Because these two things are united together and joined by an indissoluble knot — to be sensible of sin — and to submit patiently to the will of the Judge when he inflicts punishment.

Now follows the other argument, *Until he decides my cause, and vindicates my right; he will bring me forth into the light, I shall see his righteousness.* Here the Church leans on another support; for though the Lord should most heavily afflict her, she would not yet cast aside the hope of deliverance; for she knew, as we have already seen, that she was chastised for her good: and indeed no one could even for a moment continue patient in a state of misery, except he entertained the hope of being delivered, and promised to himself a happy escape. These two things then ought not to be separated, and cannot be, — the acknowledgment of our sins, which will humble us before God, — and the knowledge of his goodness, and a firm assurance as to our salvation; for God has testified that he will be ever

propitious to us, how much soever he may punish us for our sins, and that he will remember mercy, as Habakkuk says, in the midst of his wrath, (<350302> Habakkuk 3:2.) It would not then be sufficient for us to feel our evils, except the consolation, which proceeds from the promises of grace, be added.

The Prophet shows further, that the Church was innocent, with regard to its enemies, though justly suffering punishment. And this ought to be carefully observed; for whenever we have to do with the wicked, we think that there is no blame belonging to us. But these two things ought to be considered, — that the wicked trouble us without reason, and thus our cause as to them is just, — and yet that we are justly afflicted by God; for we shall ever find many reasons why the Lord should chastise us. These two things, then, ought to be both considered by us, as the Prophet seems to intimate here: for at the beginning of the verse he says, The wrath of God will I bear, for sinned have I against him; and now he adds, The Lord will yet vindicate my right, literally, “will debate my dispute,” that is, plead my cause. Since the Church is guilty before God, nay, waits not for the sentence of the judge, but anticipates it, and freely confesses herself to be worthy of such punishment, what does this mean, — that the Lord will decide her quarrel, that he will undertake her cause? These two things seem to militate the one against the other: but they agree well together when viewed in their different bearings. The Church had confessed that she had sinned against God; she now turns her eyes to another quarter; for she knew that she was unjustly oppressed by enemies; she knew that they were led to do wrong by cruelty alone. This then is the reason why the Church entertained hope, and expected that God would become the defender of her innocence, that is, against the wicked: and yet she humbly acknowledged that she had sinned against God. Whenever, then, our enemies do us harm, let us lay hold on this truth, — that God will become our defender; for he is ever the patron of justice and equity: it cannot then be, that God will abandon us to the violence of the wicked. He will then at length *plead our pleading*, or undertake our cause, and be its advocate. But, in the meantime, let our sins be remembered by us, that, being truly humbled before God, we may not hope for the salvation which he promises to us, except through gratuitous pardon. Why then are the faithful bidden to be of good comfort in their afflictions? Because God has promised to be their Father; he has received them under his protection, he

has testified that his help shall never be wanting to them. But whence is this confidence? Is it because they are worthy? Is it because they have deserved something of this kind? By no means: but they acknowledge themselves to be guilty, when they humbly prostrate themselves before God, and when they willingly condemn themselves before his tribunal, that they may anticipate his judgment. We now see how well the Prophet connects together these two things, which might otherwise seem contradictory.

Now follow the words, *He will bring me to the light, I shall see his righteousness!*^{F125} The Church still confirms herself in the hope of deliverance: art it is hence also manifest how God is light to the faithful in obscure darkness, because they see that there is prepared for them an escape from their evils; but they see it at a distance, for they extend their hope beyond the boundaries of this life. As then the truth of God diffuses itself through heaven and earth, so the faithful extend their hope far and wide. Thus it is, that they can see light afar off, which seems to be very remote from them. And having this confidence, the Prophet says, The Lord *will bring me into the light*. They have, in the meantime, as I have already said, some light; they enjoy a taste of God's goodness in the midst of their evils: but the Prophet now refers to that coming forth which we ought to look for even in the worst circumstances.

He then adds, *I shall see his righteousness*. By God's righteousness is to be understood, as it has been elsewhere stated, his favor towards the faithful; not that God returns for their works the salvation which he bestows, as ungodly men foolishly imagine; for they lay hold on the word righteousness, and think that whatever favors God freely grants us are due to our merits. — How so? For God in this way shows his own righteousness. But far different is the reason for this mode of speaking. God, in order to show how dear and precious to him is our salvation, does indeed say, that he designs to give an evidence of his justice in delivering us: but there is a reference in this word righteousness to something else; for God has promised that our salvation shall be the object of his care, hence he appears just whenever he delivers us from our troubles. Then the righteousness of God is not to be referred to the merits of works, but, on the contrary, to the promise by which he has bound himself to us; and so also in the same sense God is often said to be faithful. In a word, the righteousness and faithfulness of God mean the same thing. When the

Prophet says now in the person of the Church, *I shall see his righteousness*, he means, that though God concealed his favor for a time, and withdrew his hand, so that no hope of aid remained, it could not yet be, as he is just, but that he would succor us: *I shall see then his righteousness*, that is, God will at length really show that he is righteous. It now follows —

<330710> MICAH 7:10	
<p>10. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.</p>	<p>10. Et videbit inimica mea, et operiet eam pudor, quae dixit mihi (vel, de me,) Ubi Jehova Deus tuus? Oculi mei videbunt, et nunc erit in conculcationem sicuti lutum platearum.</p>

But I cannot finish the subject now.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that seeing we are at this day surrounded by so many miseries, yea, wherever we turn our eyes, innumerable evils meet us everywhere, which are so many evidences of thy displeasure, — O grant, that we being truly humbled before thee, may be enabled at the same time to raise up our eyes to the promises of thy free goodness and paternal favor, which thou hast made to us in thine own Son, that we may not doubt, but that thou wilt be propitious to us, inasmuch as thou hast adopted us as thy people: and while our enemies, fully armed, rage and ferociously rise even daily against us, may we not doubt, but that thou wilt be our protection, as thou knowest that we are unjustly troubled by them; and may we thus go on, trusting in thy goodness, seeing that we ever groan under the, burden of our sins, and daily confess that we are worthy of thousand deaths before thee, wert not thou pleased in thine infinite mercy always to receive and restore us to favor, through thy Son our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE NINETY-SEVENTH

In the last lecture I repeated the tenth verse of the last chapter, in which the prophet adds, as a cause of the greatest joy, that the enemies of the Church shall see granted, to their great mortification, the wonderful favor of which the Prophet had been speaking. But he describes these enemies, under the character of an envious woman, as the Church of God is also compared to a woman: and this mode of speaking is common in Scripture. He then calls Jerusalem his rival, or Babylon, or some city of his enemies.

And he says, *Covered shall she be with shame*. We know that the ungodly grow insolent when fortune smiles on them: hence in prosperity they keep within no bounds, for they think that God is under their feet. If prosperity most commonly has the effect of making the godly to forget God and even themselves, it is no wonder that the unbelieving become more and more hardened, when God is indulgent to them. With regard then to such a pride, the Prophet now says, *When my enemy shall see, shame shall cover her*; that is, she will not continue in her usual manner, to elate herself with her own boastings: nay, she will be compelled for shame to hide herself; for she will see that she had been greatly deceived, in thinking that I should be wholly ruined.

He afterwards adds, *Who said to me, Where is Jehovah thy God?* The Church of God in her turn triumphs here over the unbelieving, having been delivered by divine power; nor does she do this for her own sake, but because the ungodly expose the holy name of God to reproach, which is very common: for whenever God afflicts his people, the unbelieving immediately raise their crests, and pour forth their blasphemies against God, when yet they ought, on the contrary, to humble themselves under his hand. But since God executes his judgments on the faithful, what can be expected by his ungodly despisers? If God's vengeance be manifested in a dreadful manner with regard to the green tree, what will become of the dry wood? And the ungodly are like the dry wood. But as they are blind as to God's judgments, they petulantly deride his name, whenever they see the Church afflicted, as though adversities were not the evidences of God's displeasure: for he chastises his own children, to show that he is the judge of the world. But, as I have already said, the ungodly so harden themselves in their stupor, that they are wholly thoughtless. The faithful, therefore,

after having found God to be their deliverer, do here undertake his cause; they do not regard themselves nor their own character, but defend the righteousness of God. Such is this triumphant language, *Who said, Where is now Jehovah thy God?* “I can really show that I worship the true God, who deserts not his people in extreme necessity: after he has assisted me, my enemy, who dared to rise up against God, now seeks hiding-places.”

She shall now, he says, *be trodden under foot as the mire of the streets; and my eyes shall see her.* What the Prophet declares in the name of the Church, that the unbelieving shall be like mire, is connected with the promise, which we already noticed; for God so appears as the deliverer of his Church, as not to leave its enemies unpunished. God then, while he aids his own people, leads the ungodly to punishment. Hence the Church, while embracing the deliverance offered to her, at the same time sees the near ruin, which impends on all the despisers of God. But what is stated, *See shall my eyes*, ought not to be so taken, as though the faithful exult with carnal joy, when they see the ungodly suffering the punishment which they have deserved; for the word to see is to be taken metaphorically, as signifying a pleasant and joyful sight, according to what it means in many other places; and as it is a phrase which often occurs, its meaning must be well known. *See* then *shall my eyes*, that is, “I shall enjoy to look on that calamity, which now impends over all the ungodly.” But, as I have already said, carnal joy is not what is here intended, which intemperately exults, but that pure joy which the faithful experience on seeing the grace of God displayed and also his judgment. But this joy cannot enter into our hearts until they be cleansed from unruly passions; for we are ever excessive in fear and sorrow, as well as in hope and joy, except the Lord holds us in, as it were, with a bridle. We shall therefore be only then capable of this spiritual joy, of which the Prophet speaks, when we shall put off all disordered feelings, and God shall subdue us by his Spirit: then only shall we be able to retain moderation in our joy. The Prophet proceeds —

<330711> MICAH 7:11-12

11. In the day that thy walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed.

11. Dies ad aedificandum parietes tuos; dies iste procul abiget edictum.

12. In that day also he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain.

12. Die isto etiam ad te veniet ab Assur, et urbibus munitiois, et a munitioe etiam ad fluvium, et ad mare a mari, et a monte ad montem.

Micah pursues the subject on which he had previously spoken, — that though the Church thought itself for a time to be wholly lost, yet God would become its deliverer. He says first, *that the day was near, in which they were to build the wall*. The word גִּדָר, *gidar*, means either a mound or a wall; so it ought to be distinguished from a wall, that is, a strong fortress. He then intimates that the time would come, when God would gather his Church, and preserve it, as though it were defended on every side by walls. For we know that the scattering of the Church is compared to the pulling down of walls or fences: as when a person pulls down the fence of a field or a vineyard, or breaks down all enclosures; so when the Church is exposed as a prey to all, she is said to be like an open field or a vineyard, which is without any fence. Now, on the other hand, the Prophet says here, that the time would come, when the faithful shall again build walls, by which they may be protected from the assaults and plunder of enemies, *A day then to build thy walls*.

Then he adds, *This day shall drive afar off the edict*; some render it tribute; but the word properly means an edict, and this best suits the passage; for the Prophet's meaning is, that the people would not, as before, be subject to the tyranny of Babylon. For after the subversion of Jerusalem, the Babylonians, no doubt, triumphed very unfeelingly over the miserable people, and uttered dreadful threatening. The Prophet, therefore, under the name of edict, includes that cruel and tyrannical dominion which the Babylonians for a time exercised. We know what God denounces on the Jews by Ezekiel,

‘Ye would not keep my good laws; I will therefore give you laws which are not good, which ye shall be constrained to keep; and yet ye shall not live in them,’ (<262025> Ezekiel 20:25.)

Those laws which were not good were the edicts of which the Prophet now speaks. *That day* then *shall drive far away the edict*, that the Jews might not dread the laws of their enemies. For the Babylonians no doubt forbade, under the severest punishment, any one from building even a single house in the place where Jerusalem formerly was; for they wished that place to remain desolate, that the people might know that they had no hope of restoration. *That day* then *shall put afar off*; or drive to a distance, *the edict*; for liberty shall be given to the Jews to build their city; and then they shall not tremblingly expect every hour, until new edicts come forth, denouncing grievous punishments on whomsoever that would dare to encourage his brethren to build the temple of God.

Some draw the Prophet’s words to another meaning: they first think that he speaks only of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, and then they take **רָחַק**, *rechek*, in the sense of extending or propagating, and consider this to be the Gospel which Christ, by the command of the Father, promulgated through the whole world. It is indeed true that David uses the word decree in Psalm 2, while speaking of the preaching of the Gospel; and it is also true, that the promulgation of that decree is promised in Psalm 110, ‘The rod of his power will Jehovah send forth from Zion.’ But this passage ought not to be thus violently perverted; for the Prophet no doubt means, that the Jews would be freed from all dread of tyranny when God restored them to liberty; and **רָחַק**, *rechek*, does not mean to extend or propagate, but to drive far away. *That day* then *shall drive away the decree*, so that the faithful shall be no more subject to tyrannical commands. We now perceive the true meaning of the Prophet.

The faithful doubtless prayed in their adversities, and depended on such prophecies as we find in Psalm 102,

‘The day is now come to show mercy to Zion, and to build its walls; for thy servants pity her stones.’

Nor did the faithful pray thus presumptuously, but taking confidence, as though God had dictated a form of prayer by his own mouth, they dealt with God according to his promise, “O Lord, thou hast promised the

rebuilding of the city, and the time has been prefixed by Jeremiah and by other Prophets: since then the time is now completed, grant that the temple and the holy city may again be built.”

Some render the words, “In the day in which thou shalt build (or God shall build) thy walls — in that day shall be removed afar off the decree.” But I doubt not but that the Prophet promises here distinctly to the faithful both the restoration of the city and a civil freedom; for the sentence is in two parts: the Prophet intimates first, that the time was now near when the faithful would build their own walls, that they might not be exposed to the will of their enemies, — and then he adds, that they would be freed from the dread of tyranny; for God, as it is said by Isaiah, would break the yoke of the burden, and the scepter of the oppressor, (^{<230904>}Isaiah 9:4;) and it is altogether the same kind of sentence.

He afterwards adds, *In that day also to thee shall they come from Asshur*. There is some obscurity in the words; hence interpreters have regarded different words as being understood: but to me the meaning of the Prophet appears not doubtful. *In that day*, he says, *to thee shall they come from Asshur, and cities of the fortress and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain*; but some think הר, *er*, to be a proper name, and render the last clause, “And from mount Hor:” and we know that Aaron was buried on this mount. But the Prophet, no doubt, alludes here to some other place; and to render it mount Hor is a strained version. I doubt not, therefore, but that the Prophet repeats a common name, as though he said, “From mountains to mountains.”

Let us now see what the Prophet means. With regard to the passage, as I have said, there is no ambiguity, provided we bear in mind the main subject. Now the Prophet had this in view, — That Jerusalem, when restored by God, would be in such honor along all nations that there would be flowing to her from all parts. He then says, that the state of the city would be very splendid, so that people from all quarters would come to it: and therefore the copulative *vau* is to be taken twice for *even* for the sake of emphasis, *In that day, even to thee*, and then, *even to the river*; for it was not believed that Jerusalem would have any dignity, after it had been entirely destroyed, together with the temple. It is no wonder then that the Prophet so distinctly confirms here what was by no means probable, at

least according to the common sentiments of men, — that Jerusalem would attract to itself all nations, even those far away. *Come*, then, *shall they*, (for the verb **יָבוֹא**, *ibua*, in the singular number must be taken indefinitely as having a plural meaning,) *Come*, then, *shall they from Asshur even to thee*. But the Assyrians had previously destroyed every land, overturned the kingdom of Israel, and almost blotted out its name; and they had also laid waste the kingdom of Judah; a small portion only remained. They came afterwards, we know, with the Chaldeans, after the seat of empire was translated to Babylon, and destroyed Nineveh. Therefore, by naming the Assyrians, he no doubt, taking a part for the whole, included the Babylonians. *Come*, then, *shall they from Asshur*, and then, from the cities of the fortress, that is, from every fortress. For they who take **צֹר**, *tsur*, for Tyre are mistaken; for **מְצוֹר**, *metsur*^{F126} is mentioned twice, and it means citadels and strongholds. And then, *even to the river*, that is, to utmost borders of Euphrates; for many take Euphrates, by way of excellence, to be meant by the word river; as it is often the case in Scripture; though it might be not less fitly interpreted of any or every river, as though the Prophet had said, that there would be no obstacle to stop their course who would hasten to Jerusalem. *Even to the river* then, and *from sea to sea*, that is, they shall come in troops from remote countries, being led by the celebrity of the holy city; for when it shall be rebuilt by God's command, it shall acquire new and unusual honor, so that all people from every part shall assemble there. And then, *from mountain to mountain*, that is, from regions far asunder. This is the sum of the whole.

The Prophet then promises what all men deemed as fabulous, — that the dignity of the city Jerusalem should be so great after the return of the Jews from exile, that it would become, as it were, the metropolis of the world. One thing must be added: They who confine this passage to Christ seem not indeed to be without a plausible reason; for there follows immediately a threatening as to the desolation of the land; and there seems to be some inconsistency, except we consider the Prophet here as comparing the Church collected from all nations with the ancient people. But these things will harmonize well together if we consider, that the Prophet denounces vengeance on the unbelieving who then lived, and that he yet declares that God will be merciful to his chosen people. But the restriction which they maintain is too rigid; for we know that it was usual with the Prophets to

extend the favor of God from the return of the ancient people to the coming of Christ. Whenever, then, the Prophets make known God's favor in the deliverance of his people, they make a transition to Christ, but included also the whole intermediate time. And this mode the Prophet now pursues, and it ought to be borne in mind by us. Let us go on —

<330713> **MICAH 7:13**

13. Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

13. Et erit terra in desolationem propter incolas suos, a fructu operorum ipsorum.

The Prophet, as I have already said, seems to be inconsistent with himself: for after having spoken of the restoration of the land, he now abruptly says, that it would be deserted, because God had been extremely provoked by the wickedness of the people. But, as I have stated before, it was almost an ordinary practice with the Prophets, to denounce at one time God's vengeance on all the Jews, and then immediately to turn to the faithful, who were small in number, and to raise up their minds with the hope of deliverance. We indeed know that the Prophets had to do with the profane despisers of God; it was therefore necessary for them to fulminate, when they addressed the whole body of the people: the contagion had pervaded all orders, so that they were all become apostates, from the highest to the lowest, with very few exceptions, and those hidden amidst the great mass, like a few grains in a vast heap of chaff. Then the Prophets did not without reason mingle consolations with threatening; and their threatening they addressed to the whole body of the people; and then they whispered, as it were, in the ear, some consolation to the elect of God, the few remnants, — "Yet the Lord will show mercy to you; though he has resolved to destroy his people, ye shall yet remain safe, but this will be through some hidden means." Our Prophet then does, on the one hand, as here, denounce God's vengeance on a people past remedy; and, on the others he speaks of the redemption of the Church, that by this support the faithful might be sustained in their adversities.

He now says, *The land shall be for desolation.*^{F127} But why does he speak in so abrupt a manner? That he might drive hypocrites from that false

confidence, with which they were swollen though God addressed not a word to them: but when God pronounced any thing, as they covered themselves with the name of Church, they then especially laid hold of any thing that was said to the faithful, as though it belonged to them: “Has not God promised that he will be the deliverer of his people?” as though indeed he was to be their deliverer, who had alienated themselves by their perfidy from him; and yet this was a very common thing among them. Hence the Prophet, seeing that hypocrites would greedily lay hold on what he had said, and by taking this handle would become more audacious, says now, *The land shall be for desolation*, that is, “Be ye gone; for when God testifies that he will be the deliverer of his Church, he does not address you; for ye are the rotten members; and the land shall be reduced to a waste before God’s favor, of which I now speak, shall appear.” We now then perceive the reason for this passage, why the Prophet so suddenly joined threatenings to promises: it was, to terrify hypocrites.

He says, *On account of its inhabitants, from the fruit*, or, on account of the fruit *of their works*. Here the Prophet closes the door against the despisers of God, lest they should break forth, according to their custom, and maintain that God was, as it were, bound to them: “See,” he says, “what ye are; for ye have polluted the land with your vices; it must therefore be reduced to desolation.” And when the land, which is in itself innocent, is visited with judgment, what will become of those despisers whose wickedness it sustains? We hence see how emphatical was this mode of speaking. For the Prophet summons here all the unbelieving to examine their life, and then he sets before them the land, which was to suffer punishment, though it had committed no sin; and why was it to suffer? because it was polluted as I have said by their wickedness. Since this was the case, we see, that hypocrites were very justly driven away from the false confidence with which they were inflated, while they yet proudly despised God and his Word. It now follows —

<330714> MICAH 7:14

14. Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.

14. Pasce populum tuum in virga tua (vel, paedo tuo) gregem haereditatis tuae, habitantes in solitudine (vel, seorsum) in sylvā, in medio Carmeli; pascentur in Basan et Gilead, secundum dies antiquos.

Here the Prophet turns to supplications and prayers; by which he manifests more vehemence, than if he had repeated again what he had previously said of the restoration of the Church; for he shows how dreadful that judgment would be, when God would reduce the land into solitude. This prayer no doubt contains what was at the same time prophetic. The Prophet does not indeed simply promise deliverance to the faithful, but at the same time he doubly increases that terror; by which he designed to frighten hypocrites; as though he said, “Most surely except God will miraculously preserve his own people, it is all over with the Church: there is then no remedy, except through the ineffable power of God.” In short, the Prophet shows, that he trembled at that vengeance, which he had previously foretold, and which he did foretell, lest hypocrites, in their usual manner, should deride him. We now see why the Prophet had recourse to this kind of comfort, why he so regulates his discourse as not to afford immediate hope to the faithful, but addresses God himself. *Feed* then *thy people*; as though he said, — “Surely that calamity will be fatal, except thou, Lord, wilt be mindful of thy covenant, and gather again some remnant from the people whom thou hast been pleased to choose: Feed thy people.”

The reason why he called them the people of God was, because they must all have perished, unless it had been that it was necessary that what God promised to Abraham should be fulfilled, —

‘In thy seed shall all nations be blessed,’ (<011203> Genesis 12:3.)

It was then the adoption of God alone which prevented the total destruction of the Jews. Hence he says emphatically, — O Lord, these are yet thy people; as though he said, — “By whom wilt thou now form a

Church for thyself?” God might indeed have collected it from the Gentiles, and have made aliens his family; but it was necessary that the root of adoption should remain in the race of Abraham, until Christ came forth. Nor was there then any dispute about God’s power, as there is now among fanatics, who ask, Can God do this? But there was reliance on the promise, and from this they learnt with certainty what God had once decreed, and what he would do. Since then this promise, ‘By thy seed shall all nations be blessed,’ was sacred and inviolable, the grace of God must have ever continued in the remnant. It is indeed certain, that hypocrites, as it has been already stated, without any discrimination, abused the promises of God; but this truth must be ever borne in mind, that God punished the ungodly, though relying on their great number, they thought that they would be always preserved. God then destroyed *them*, as they deserved; and yet it was his purpose, that some remnant should be among that people. But it must be observed, that this distinction ought not to be extended to all the children of Abraham, who derived their origin from him according to the flesh, but to be applied to the faithful, that is, to the remnant, who were preserved according to the gratuitous adoption of God.

Feed then thy people *by thy crook*.^{F128} He compares God to a shepherd, and this metaphor often occurs. Though שׂבֵת, *shebeth*, indeed signifies a scepter when kings are mentioned, it is yet taken also for a pastoral staff, as in Psalm 23 and in many other places. As then he represents God here as a Shepherd, so he assigns a crook to him; as though he said, O Lord, thou performest the office of a Shepherd in ruling this people. How so? He immediately confirms what I have lately said, that there was no hope of a remedy except through the mercy of God, by adding *the flock*^{F129} *of thine heritage*; for by calling them the flock of his heritage, he does not consider what the people deserved, but fixes his eyes on their gratuitous adoption. Since, then, it had pleased God to choose that people, the Prophet on this account dares to go forth to God’s presence, and to plead their gratuitous election, — “O Lord, I will not bring before thee the nobility of our race, or any sort of dignity, or our piety, or any merits.” What then? “We are thy people, for thou best declared that we are a royal priesthood. We are then thine heritage.” How so? “Because it has been thy pleasure to have one peculiar people sacred to thee.” We now more clearly see that the Prophet relied on God’s favor alone, and opposed the recollection of the covenant to the trials which might have otherwise made every hope to fail.

He afterwards adds, *Who dwell apart*, or alone. He no doubt refers here to the dispersion of the people, when he says, that they dwelt alone. For though the Jews had been scattered in countries delightful, fertile and populous, yet they were everywhere as in a desert and in solitude, for they were a mutilated body. The whole of Chaldea and of Assyria was then really a desert to the faithful; for there they dwelt not as one people, but as members torn asunder. This is the dispersion intended by the words of the Prophet. He also adds, that dwell *in the forest*. For they had no secure habitation except in their own country; for they lived there under the protection of God; and all other countries, as I have already said, were to them like the desert.

He adds, *In the midst of Carmel*. The preposition כ, *caph*, is to be understood here, *As in the midst of Carmel, they shall be fed in Bashan and Gilead, as in ancient days*; ^{F130} that is, though they are now thy solitary sheep, yet thou wilt gather them again that they may feed as on Carmel, (which we know was very fruitful,) and then, *as in Bashan and Gilead*. We know that there are in those places the richest pastures. Since then the Prophet compares the faithful to sheep, he mentions Bashan, he mentions Carmel and Gilead; as though he said, “Restore, O Lord, thy people, that they may dwell in the heritage once granted them by thee.” Why he says that they were solitary, I have already explained; and there is a similar passage in ^{<19a217>} Psalm 102:17; though there is there a different word, ערער, *oror*; but the meaning is the same. The faithful are there said to be solitary, because they were not collected into one body; for this was the true happiness of the people, — that they worshipped God together, that they were under one head, and also that they had one altar as a sacred bond to cherish unity of faith. When therefore the faithful were scattered here and there they were justly said to be solitary, wherever they were.

He afterwards adds, *according to ancient days*. Here he places before God the favors which he formerly showed to his people, and prays that he would, like himself, go on to the end, that is that he would continue to the end his favors to his chosen people. And it availed not a little to confirm their faith, when the faithful called to mind how liberally had God dealt from the beginning with the posterity of Abraham: they were thus made to feel assured, that God would be no less kind to his elect, though there might be, so to speak, a sad separation: for when God had banished the Jews into exile, it was a kind of divorce, as though they were given to utter

destruction. Yet now when they recollect that they had descended from the holy fathers, and that a Redeemer had been promised them, they justly entertain a hope of favor in future from the past benefits of God, because he had formerly kindly treated his people.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that since we have so provoked thy displeasure by our sins, that a dreadful waste and solitude appear everywhere — O grant, that a proof of that favor, which thou hast so remarkably exhibited towards thy ancient people, may shine upon us, so that thy Church may be raised up in which true religion may flourish, and thy name be glorified: and may we daily solicit thee in our prayers and never doubt, but that under the government of thy Christ, thou canst again gather together the whole world, though it be miserably dispersed, so that we may persevere in this warfare to the end, until we shall at length know that we have not in vain hoped in thee, and that our prayers have not been in vain, when Christ shall exercise the power given to him for our salvation and for that of the whole world. Amen.

LECTURE NINETY-EIGHTH

<330715> MICAH 7:15

15. According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous *things*.

15. Secundum dies egressus tui e terra Aegypti, ostendam ei mirabilia.

The Prophet here introduces God as the speaker; and he so speaks as to give an answer to his prayer. God then promises that he will be wonderful in his works, and give such evidences of his power, as he exhibited when he brought up his people from the land of Egypt. We now see that there is more force in this passage, than if the Prophet had at first said, that God would become the deliverer of his people: for he interposed entreaty and prayer and God now shows that he will be merciful to his people; and at the same time the faithful are reminded, that they must be instant in prayer, if they desire to be preserved by God.

Now God says that *he will show wonderful things*, as when the people formerly came out of Egypt. ^{F131} That redemption, we know, was a perpetual monument of God's power in the preservation of his Church; so that whenever he designs to give some hope of deliverances he reminds the faithful of those miracles that they may feel assured that there will be no obstacles to prevent them from continuing in a state of safety, provided God will be pleased to help them, for his power is not diminished.

And this deserves to be noticed; for though we all allow the omnipotence of God, yet when we struggle with trials, we tremble, as though all the avenues to our preservation had been closed up against God. As soon then as any impediment is thrown in our way, we think that there is no hope. Whence is this? It is because we make no account of God's power, which yet we confess to be greater than that of the whole world.

This is the reason why God now refers to the miracles which he wrought at the coming forth of the people. They ought to have known, that God ever continues like himself, and that his power remains as perfect as it was

formerly; and there is in him sufficient support to encourage the hope of assistance. We now perceive the object of the Prophet. He indeed changes the persons; for in the beginning he addresses the people, according to the days of thy going forth, and then he adds, אָרָאנִי, *aranu*, ‘I will make him to see;’ but this change does not obscure the meaning, for God only means, that his power was sufficiently known formerly to his people, and that there was a memorable proof of it in their redemption, so that the people could not have doubted respecting their safety, without being ungrateful to God, and without burying in oblivion that so memorable a benefit, which God once conferred on their fathers. It follows —

<330716> MICAH 7:16-17	
16. The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf.	16. Videbunt gentes et pudefient ab omni fortitudine sua; ponent manum super os, aures eorum surdescent:
17. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee.	17. Lingent pulverem quasi serpens, quasi reptilia terrae frement (vel, movebunt) a latibulis suis; ad Jehovam Deum nostrum pavebunt, et metuent sibi abs te.

Here again the Prophet shows, that though the Church should be assailed on every side and surrounded by innumerable enemies, no doubt ought yet to be entertained respecting the promised aid of God; for it is in his power to make all nations ashamed, that is, to cast down all the pride of the world, so as to make the unbelieving to acknowledge at length that they were elated by an empty confidence. Hence he says, that the *nations shall see*; as though he said, “I know what makes you anxious, for many enemies are intent on your ruin; and when any help appears, they are immediately prepared fiercely to resist; but their attempts and efforts will not prevent God from delivering you.”

They shall then see and be ashamed of all their strength. ^{F132} By these words the Prophet means, that however strongly armed the unbelieving may think themselves to be to destroy the Church, and that how many

obstacles soever they may have in their power to restrain the power of God in its behalf, yet the whole will be in vain, for God will, in fact, prove that the strength of men is mere nothing.

He adds, *They shall lay their hand on their mouth*; that is, they shall not dare to boast hereafter, as they have hitherto done; for this phrase in Hebrew means to be silent. Since then the enemies of the Church made great boastings and exulted with open mouth, as though the people of God were destroyed, the Prophet says, that when God would appear as the Redeemer of his people, they should become, as it were, mute. He subjoins, *their ears shall become deaf*; ^{F133} that is, they shall stand astounded; nay, they shall hardly dare to open their ears, lest the rumor, brought to them, should occasion to them new trembling. Proud men, we know, when matters succeed according to their wishes, not only boast of their good fortune with open mouths, but also greedily catch at all rumors; for as they think they are all so many messages of victories, — “What is from this place? or what is from that place?” They even expect that the whole world will come under their power. The Prophet, on the other hand, says, “They shall lay the hand on the mouth, and their ears shall become deaf; that is they shall tremblingly shun all rumors, for they shall continually dread new calamities, when they shall see that the God of Israel, against who they have hitherto fought, is armed with so much power.

Some apply this to the preaching of the Gospel; which I readily allow, provided the deliverance be made always to begin with the ancient people: for if any one would have this to be understood exclusively of Christ, such a strained and remote exposition would not be suitable. But if any one will consider the favor of God, as continued from the return of the people to the restoration effected by Christ, he will rightly comprehend the real design of the Prophet. Really fulfilled, then, is what the Prophet says here, when God spreads the doctrine of his Gospel through the whole world: for those who before boasted of their own inventions, begin then to close their mouth, that, being thus silent, they may become his disciples; and they also close their ears, for now they give not up themselves, as before, to foolish and puerile fables, but consecrate their whole hearing to the only true God, that they may attend only to his truth, and no more vacillate between contrary opinions. All this, I allow, is fulfilled under the preaching of the Gospel; but the Prophet, no doubt, connected together the

whole time, from the return of the people from the Babylonian exile, to the manifestation of Christ.

He afterwards adds, *They shall lick the dust as a serpent*. He intimates, that however the enemies of the Church may have proudly exalted themselves before, they shall then be cast down, and lie, as it were, on the ground; for to lick the dust is nothing else but to lie prostrate on the earth. They shall then be low and creeping like serpents; and then, *They shall move themselves as worms and reptiles of the ground*. The verb רגז, *regez*, as it has been stated elsewhere, means to raise an uproar, to tumultuate, and it means also to move one's self; and this latter meaning is the most suitable here, namely, that they shall go forth or move themselves from their enclosures; for the word סגר, *sager*, signifies to close up: and by enclosures he means hiding-places, though in the song of David, in Psalm 18:, the word is applied to citadels and other fortified places, —

‘Men,’ he says, ‘trembled from their fortresses;’

though they occupied well-fortified citadels, they yet were afraid, because the very fame of David had broken down their boldness. But as the Prophet speaks here of worms, I prefer this rendering, — ‘from their lurkingplaces;’ as though he said, “Though they have hitherto thought themselves safe in their enclosures, they shall yet move and flee away like worms and reptiles; for when the ground is dug, the worms immediately leap out, for they think that they are going to be taken; so also, when any one moves the ground, the reptiles come forth, and tremblingly run away in all directions.” And the Prophet says that, in like manner, the enemies of the Church, when the Lord shall arise for its help, shall be smitten with so much fear, that they shall in every direction run away. And this comparison ought to be carefully noticed, that is, when the Prophet compares powerful nations well exercised in wars, who before were audaciously raging, and were swollen with great pride — when he compares them to worms and reptiles of the ground, and also to serpents: he did this to show, that there will be nothing to hinder God from laying prostrate every exalted thing in the world, as soon as it shall please him to aid his Church.

And hence the Prophet adds, *On account of Jehovah our God they shall tread, and they shall fear because of thee*. Here the Prophet shows, that the faithful ought not to distrust on account of their own weakness, but, on

the contrary, to remember the infinite power of God. It is indeed right that the children of God should begin with diffidence, — sensible that they are nothing, and that all their strength is nothing; but they ought not to stop at their own weakness, but, on the contrary, to rise up to the contemplation of God’s power, that they may not doubt but that, when his power shall appear, their enemies shall be soon scattered. This is the reason why the Prophet here mentions the name of God, and then turns to address God himself. *Tremble then shall they at Jehovah our God*, that is, on account of Jehovah our God; and then *Fear shall they because of thee.* ^{F134} It now follows —

<330718> MICAH 7:18	
<p>18. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.</p>	<p>18. Quis Deus sicut tu, tollens iniquitatem, et transiens super scelus, erga reliquias haereditatis suae? Non retinebit in perpetuum iram suam (alii vertunt, non roboravit; nam חַיִּים hoc interdum significat; sed potius hic vertendum est, non retinebit;) quia placet ei clementia (vel, diligit misericordiam.) <small>F135</small></p>

The Prophet here exclaims that God ought to be glorified especially for this — that he is merciful to his people. When he says, *Who is God as thou art?* he does not mean that there are other gods; for this, strictly speaking, is an improper comparison. But he shows that the true and only God may be distinguished from all idols by this circumstance — that he graciously forgives the sins of his people and bears with their infirmities. It is indeed certain, that all nations entertained the opinion, that their gods were ready to pardon; hence their sacrifices and hence also their various kinds of expiations. Nor has there been any nation so barbarous as not to own themselves guilty in some measure before God; hence all the Gentiles were wont to apply to the mercy of their gods; while yet they had no firm conviction: for though they laid hold on this first principle, — that the gods would be propitious to sinners, if they humbly sought pardon; yet they prayed, we know, with no sure confidence, for they had no certain promise. We hence see that what the Prophet means is this, — that the

God of Israel could be proved to be the true God from this circumstance — that having once received into favor the children of Abraham, he continued to show the same favor, and kept his covenant inviolably, though their sins had been a thousand times a hindrance in the way. That God then in his goodness surmounted all the wickedness of the people, and stood firm in his covenant, which had been so often violated by vices of the people — this fact may be brought as an evidence, that he is the true God: for what can be found of this kind among idols? Let us suppose that there is in them something divine, that they were gods, and endued with some power; yet with regard to the gods of the Gentiles, it could not be known that any one of them was propitious to his own people. Since then this can apply only to the God of Israel, it follows that in this instance his divinity shines conspicuously, and that his sovereignty is hence sufficiently proved. We also learn, that all the gods of heathens are vain; yea, that in the religion of heathens there is nothing but delusions: for no nation can with confidence flee to its god to obtain pardon, when it has sinned. This is the sum of the whole. I shall now come to the words of the Prophet.

Who is a God like thee, taking away iniquity, and passing by wickedness? By these two forms of expression, he sets forth the singular favor of God in freely reconciling himself to sinners. To take away sins is to blot them out; though the verb נָשָׂא, *nusha*, often means to raise on high; yet it means also to take, or, to take away. To pass by wickedness, is to connive at it, as though he said, “God overlooks the wickedness of his people, as if it escaped his view:” for when God requires an account of our life, our sins immediately appear, and appear before his eyes; but when God does not call our sins before his judgment, but overlooks them, he is then said to pass by them.

This passage teaches us, as I have already reminded you, that the glory of God principally shines in this, — that he is reconcilable, and that he forgives our sins. God indeed manifests his glory both by his power and his wisdom, and by all the judgments which he daily executes; his glory, at the same time, shines forth chiefly in this, — that he is propitious to sinners, and suffers himself to be pacified; yea, that he not only allows miserable sinners to be reconciled to him, but that he also of his own will invites and anticipates them. Hence then it is evident, that he is the true God. That religion then may have firm roots in our hearts, this must be the

first thing in our faith, — that God will ever be reconciled to us; for except we be fully persuaded as to his mercy, no true religion will ever flourish in us, whatever pretensions we may make; for what is said in Psalm 130 is ever true, ‘With thee is propitiation, that thou mayest be feared.’ Hence the fear of God, and the true worship of him, depend on a perception of his goodness and favor; for we cannot from the heart worship God, and there will be, as I have already said, no genuine religion in us, except this persuasion be really and deeply seated in our hearts, — that he is ever ready to forgive, whenever we flee to him.

It hence also appears what sort of religion is that of the Papacy: for under the Papacy, being perplexed and doubtful, they ever hesitate, and never dare to believe that God will be propitious to them. Though they have some ideas, I know not what, of his grace; yet it is a vain presumption and rashness, as they think, when any one is fully persuaded of God’s mercy. They therefore keep consciences in suspense; nay, they leave them doubtful and trembling, when there is no certainty respecting God’s favor. It hence follows, that their whole worship is fictitious; in a word, the whole of religion is entirely subverted, when a firm and unhesitating confidence, as to his goodness, is taken away, yea, that confidence by which men are enabled to come to him without doubting, and to receive, whenever they sin and confess their guilt and transgressions, the mercy that is offered to them.

But this confidence is not what rises spontaneously in us; nay, even when we entertain a notion that God is merciful, it is only a mere delusion: for we cannot be fully convinced respecting God’s favor, except he anticipates us by his word, and testifies that he will be propitious to us whenever we flee to him. Hence I said at the beginning, that the Prophet here exhibits the difference between the God of Israel and all the idols of the Gentiles, and that is, because he had promised to be propitious to his people. It was not in vain that sacrifices were offered by the chosen people, for there was a promise added, which could not disappoint them: but the Gentiles ever remained doubtful with regard to their sacrifices; though they performed all their expiations, there was yet no certainty; but the case was different with the chosen people. What then the Prophet says here respecting the remission of sins, depends on the testimony which God himself has given.

We must now notice the clause which immediately follows, *as to the remnant of his heritage*. Here again he drives away the hypocrites from their vain confidence: for he says that God will be merciful only to a remnant of his people; and, at the same time, he takes away an offense, which might have grievously disquieted the weak, on seeing the wrath of God raging among the whole people, — that God would spare neither the common nor the chief men. When therefore the fire of God’s vengeance flamed terribly, above and below, this objection might have greatly disturbed weak minds, — “How is this? God does indeed declare that he is propitious to sinners, and yet his severity prevails among us. — How can this be?” The Prophet meets this objection and says, God is propitious to the remnant of his heritage; which means, that though God would execute terrible vengeance on the greater part, there would yet ever remain some seed, on whom his mercy would shine; and he calls them the remnant of his heritage, because there was no reason, as it was stated yesterday, why God forgave the few, except that he had chosen the posterity of Abraham.

He also adds, *He will not retain his wrath perpetually*. By this second consolation he wished to relieve the faithful: for though God chastises them for a time, he yet forgets not his mercy. We may say, that the Prophet mentions here two exceptions. He had spoken of God’s mercy; but as this mercy is not indiscriminate or common to all, he restricts what he teaches to the remnant. Now follows another exception, — that how much soever apparently the wrath of God would rage against his elect people themselves, there would yet be some moderation, so that they would remain safe, and that their calamities would not be to them fatal. Hence he says, God retains not wrath; for though, for a moment, he may be angry with his people, he will yet soon, as it were, repent, and show himself gracious to them, and testify that he is already reconciled to them; — not that God changes, but that the faithful are made for a short time to feel his wrath; afterwards a taste of his mercy exhilarates them, and thus they feel in their souls that God has in a manner changed. For when dread possesses their minds, they imagine God to be terrible, but when they embrace the promises of his grace, they call on him, and begin to entertain hope of pardon; then God appears to them kind, gentle, and reconcilable; yea, and altogether ready to show mercy. This is the reason why the Prophet says, that *God retains not his wrath*.

Then follows the cause, *for he loveth mercy*. Here the Prophet more clearly shows, that the remission of sins is gratuitous, and that it has no foundation but in the nature of God himself. There is then no reason, since Scripture declares God to be reconcilable, why any one should seek the cause in himself, or even the means by which God reconciles himself to us: for He himself is the cause. As God then by nature loves mercy, hence it is, that he is so ready to forgive sinners. Whosoever then imagines that God is to be propitiated by expiations or any satisfactions, subverts the doctrine of the Prophet; and it is the same thing as to build without a foundation: for the only prop or support that can raise us up to God, when we desire to be reconciled to him, is this, — that he loves mercy. And this is the reason why God so much commends his mercy, why he says that he is merciful to thousand generations, slow to wrath, and ready to pardon. For though the unbelieving harden themselves against God, yet when they feel his wrath, there is nothing so difficult for them as to believe that God can be pacified. Hence this reason, which is not in vain added by the Prophet, ought to be especially noticed.

Let us now see to whom God is merciful. For as Satan could not have obliterated from the hearts of men a conviction of God's mercy, he has yet confined mercy to the unbelieving, as though God should forgive sinners only once, when they are admitted into the Church. Thus the Pelagians formerly thought, that God grants reconciliation to none but to aliens; for whosoever has been once received into the Church cannot, as they imagined, stand otherwise before God than by being perfect. And this figment led Novatus and his disciples to create disturbances in the Church. And there are at this day not only deluded men, but devils, who, by the same figment, or rather delirious notions, fascinate themselves and others, and hold, that the highest perfection ought to exist in the faithful; and they also slander our doctrine, as though we were still continuing in the Alphabet or in the first rudiments, because we daily preach free remission of sins. But the Prophet declares expressly that God not only forgives the unbelieving when they sin, but also his heritage and his elect. Let us then know, that as long as we are in the world, pardon is prepared for us, as we could not otherwise but fall every moment from the hope of salvation, were not this remedy provided for us: for those men must be more than mad who arrogate to themselves perfection, or who think that they have

arrived at that high degree of attainment, that they can satisfy God by their works. It now follows —

<330719> MICAH 7:19

19. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

19. Reveretur, miserebitur nostri; calcabit iniquitates nostras, et projiciet in profunditates maris cuncta scelera eorum.

The Prophet now prescribes to the faithful a form of glorying, that they may boldly declare that God will be pacified towards them. Since then God loves mercy, *he will return, he will have mercy on us*. The context here ought to be observed by us; for it would avail us but little to understand, I know not what, concerning God's mercy, and to preach in general the free remission of sins, except we come to the application, that is, except each of the faithful believed that God, for his own sake, is merciful, as soon as he is called upon. This conclusion, then, is to be borne in mind, — "God forgives the remnant of his heritage, because he is by nature inclined to show mercy: he will *therefore* be merciful to us, for we are of the number of his people." Except we lay hold on this conclusion, "He will therefore show mercy to us," whatever we have heard or said respecting God's goodness will vanish away.

This then is the true logic of religion, that is, when we are persuaded that God is reconcilable and easily pacified, because he is by nature inclined to mercy, and also, when we thus apply this doctrine to ourselves, or to our own peculiar benefit, — As God is by nature merciful, I shall therefore know and find him to be so. Until then we be thus persuaded, let us know that we have made but little progress in the school of God. And hence it appears very clear from this passage, that the Papacy is a horrible abyss; for no one under that system can have a firm footing, so as to be fully persuaded that God will be merciful to him; for all that they have are mere conjectures. But we see that the Prophet reasons very differently, God loves mercy; he will therefore have mercy on us: and then he adds, *He will return;*^{F136} and this is said lest the temporary wrath or severity of God should disquiet us. Though God then may not immediately shine on us with his favor, but, on the contrary, treat us sharply and roughly, yet the

Prophet teaches us that we are to entertain good hope. — How so? *He will return*, or, as he said shortly before, He will not retain perpetually his wrath: for it is for a moment that he is angry with his Church; and he soon remembers mercy.

The Prophet now specifies what sort of mercy God shows to the faithful, *For he will tread down our iniquities*; he had said before that he passes by the wickedness of his elect people. *He will then tread down our iniquities; and he will cast^{F137} into the depth of the sea all their sins*; that is our sins shall not come in remembrance before him. We hence learn what I have said before — that God cannot be worshipped sincerely and from the heart until this conviction be fixed and deeply rooted in our hearts, that God is merciful, not in general, but toward us, because we have been once adopted by him and are his heritage. And then were the greater part to fall away, we should not fail in our faith; for God preserves the remnant in a wonderful manner. And lastly, let us know, that whenever we flee to God for mercy, pardon is ever ready for us, not that we may indulge in sin, or take liberty to commit it, but that we may confess our faults and that our guilt may appear before our eyes: let us know, that the door is open to us; for God of his own good will presents himself to us as one ready to be reconciled.

It is also said, *He will cast our sins into the depth of the sea*. We hence learn that there is a full remission of sins, not half as the Papists imagine, for God, they say, remits the sin, but retains the punishment. How frivolous this is, the thing itself clearly proves. The language of the Prophet does however import this, that our sins are then remitted when the records of them are blotted out before God. It follows — for I will run over this verse, that I may today finish this Prophet —

<330720> MICAH 7:20	
20. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.	20. Dabis veritatem Jacob, misericordiam Abrahæ, quas jurasti patribus nostris a diebus antiquis.

The faithful confirm here the former truth, that God had deposited his covenant with them, which could not be made void: and hence also shines forth more clearly what I have said before, that the faithful do not learn by their own understanding what sort of Being God is, but embrace the mercy which he offers in his own word. Except God then speaks, we cannot form in our own minds any idea of his grace but what is uncertain and vanishing; but when he declares that he will be merciful to us, then every doubt is removed. This is now the course which the Prophet pursues.

He says, *Thou wilt give truth to Jacob, mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn to our fathers*; as though he said, “We do not presumptuously invent any thing out of our own minds, but receive what thou hast once testified to us; for thy will has been made known to us in thy word: relying then on thy favor, we are persuaded as to thy gratuitous pardon, though we are in many respects guilty before thee.” We now then understand the design of the Prophet.

As to the words, it is not necessary to dwell on them, for we have elsewhere explained this form of speaking. There are here two expressions by which the Prophet characterizes the covenant of God. Truth is mentioned, and mercy is mentioned. With respect to order, the mercy of God precedes; for he is not induced otherwise to adopt us than through his goodness alone: but as God of his own will has with so great kindness received us, so he is true and faithful in his covenant. If then we desire to know the character of God’s covenant, by which he formerly chose the Jews, and at this day adopts us as his people, these two things must be understood, that God freely offers himself to us, and that he is constant and true, he repents not, as Paul says, as to his covenant: The gifts and calling of God, he says, are without repentance, (<451129> Romans 11:29;) and he refers to the covenant, by which God adopted the children of Abraham.

He says now, *Thou wilt give*, that is, show in reality; for this, to give, is, as it were, to exhibit in effect or really. *Thou will then give*, that is, openly show, that thou hast not been in vain so kind to us and ours, in receiving them into favor. How so? Because the effect of thy goodness and truth appears to us.

Thou hast then sworn to our fathers from the days of old. The faithful take for granted that God had promised to the fathers that his covenant would

be perpetual; for he did not only say to Abraham, I will be thy God, but he also added, and of thy seed for ever. Since, then, the faithful knew that the covenant of God was to be perpetual and inviolable, and also knew that it was to be continued from the fathers to their children, and that it was once promulgated for this end, that the fathers might deliver it as by the hand to their children; they therefore doubted not but that it would be perpetual. How so? *for thou hast sworn to our fathers*; that is, they knew that God not only promised, but that having interposed an oath, by which God designed to confirm that covenant, he greatly honored it, that it might be unhesitatingly received by the chosen people. As then the faithful knew that God in a manner bound himself to them, they confidently solicited him, really to show himself to be such as he had declared he would be to his own elect.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we abound in so many vices, by which we daily provoke thy wrath, and as by the testimony of our consciences, we are justly exposed to everlasting death, yea, and deserve a hundred and even a thousand deaths, — O grant, that we may strive against the unbelief of our flesh, and so embrace thine infinite mercy, that we may not doubt but that thee wilt be propitious to us, and yet not abuse this privilege by taking liberty to sin, but with fear, and true humility, and care, so walk according to thy word, that we may not hesitate daily to flee to thy mercy, that we may thereby be sustained and kept in safety, until having at length put off all vices, and being freed from all sin, we come to thy celestial kingdom, to enjoy the fruit of our faith, even that eternal inheritance which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. Amen.

END OF THE COMMENTARIES ON MICAH.

A TRANSLATION OF

CALVIN'S VERSION OF

THE PROPHECIES OF MICAH.

CHAPTER 1

- 1** THE word of Jehovah, which came to Micah, the Morasthite, in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem:
- 2** Hear, all ye people, Give ear, O earth, and its fullness; (155)
And the Lord Jehovah shall be against you a witness, *Even* the Lord from the temple of his holiness:
- 3** For, behold, Jehovah goeth forth from his place, And will descend and tread on the heights of the earth;
- 4** And melt shall the mountains under him, And rent shall be the valleys; As wax before the fire, As waters rolling into a lower place. (160)
- 5** For the wickedness of Jacob is all this, And for the transgressions of the house of Israel: What is the wickedness of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not *those of* Jerusalem? (162)
- 6** I will therefore make Samaria A heap of the field, a plantation for vineyards; And I will roll into the valley its stones, And its foundations will I discover;
- 7** And all her graven images shall be broken down, And all her rewards shall be burnt in the fire, And all her idols will I lay desolate; For from the reward of a harlot hath she gathered, And to the reward of a harlot shall they return.

- 8** For this will I wail and howl, I will go spoiled and naked; I will make wailing as the dragons, And mourning as the daughters of the ostrich: (170)
- 9** For grievous is her stroke, For it has come to Judah, It has reached the gate of my people—even Jerusalem.
- 10** In Gath tell ye it not; weeping, weep not; In the house of Ophrah, roll thyself in the dust.
- 11** Pass over also, thou inhabitant of Saphir, Naked and in shame; Go forth shall not the inhabitant of Zaanan, In the mourning of Beth-ezel; She will take from you her station. (176)
- 12** Verily, grieved for good has the inhabitant of Maroth; For come down has evil from Jehovah To the gate of Jerusalem.
- 13** Tie the chariot to the dromedary, Thou inhabitant of Lachish; The beginning of sin has she been to the daughter of Zion; For in thee have been found the transgressions of Israel.
- 14** Thou shalt therefore send presents, For Moresheth-gath, to the sons of Achzib, (180) *Who have been* a deception to the kings of Israel.
- 15** Yet a possessor will I send to thee, inhabitant of Mareshah; Even to Adullam, the glory of Israel, shall he come.
- 16** Make bald, and poll thyself, For the children of thy delicacies; Enlarge thy baldness as the eagle, Inasmuch as they have migrated from thee.

CHAPTER 2

- 1** Woe to those who devise iniquity, And contrive wickedness on their beds! When the morning shines, they execute it; For to do it their hand is ready.
- 2** And they covet fields, and forcibly take them; And houses, and they take them away; And they oppress a man and his house, A man and his heritage. (187)

- 3** Therefore, thus saith Jehovah,— Behold, I am devising against this family an evil, From which ye shall not remove your necks; And ye shall not walk in your height, For an evil time will it be.
- 4** In that day shall they take up against thee a proverb, And bewail with a lamentable lament, And say, “Wasted, we are laid waste; The portion of my people has he changed; How he takes away from me instead of restoring! Our fields he divides.” (191)
- 5** There shall not therefore be for thee One to cast a line for lot in the assembly of Jehovah.
- 6** “Prophecy not, ye who prophesy;”— They shall not prophesy for them;— He will not take reproaches. (195)
- 7** O thou who art called the house of Jacob! Is the Spirit of Jehovah straightened? Are these his works? Are not my words good to him Who walks uprightly? (201)
- 8** And they who were heretofore my people, Have risen up as an enemy against me; The robe of beauty they plunder From those who pass by securely, As those who return from war. (203)
- 9** The women of my people have ye expelled From the house of their delights; From their children have ye taken away My ornament forever. (204)
- 10** Arise, depart, for this is not *your* rest; Because it has been polluted: (206) He will scatter *you* with a violent scattering.
- 11** If a man, walking in the spirit, and lying deceitfully, says, “I will prophesy to thee of wine and of strong drink,” He shall be the prophet of this people. (208)
- 12** Gathering, I will gather the whole of thee Jacob, Assembling, I will assemble the residue of Israel; I will set them together as the sheep of Bozrah, As a flock in the midst of its fold; They shall make a noise on account *of the number* of men.
- 13** Ascend shall a breaker before them, They shall break through and pass the gate; Yea, they shall go out through it; And pass shall their king before them, And Jehovah at their head. (215)

CHAPTER 3

- 1 And I said, “Hear, I pray, ye princes of Jacob; And ye rulers of the house of Israel: Is it not for you to know judgment?”
- 2 But they hate good and love evil; They pull off the skin from them, And the flesh from their bones:
- 3 Yea, they devour the flesh of my people, And their skin they strip from them, And their bones they break, And make them small as for the pot, And their flesh for the cauldron.
- 4 They shall then cry to Jehovah, And he will not answer them, But he will hide his face from them at that time, As they have acted perversely in their doings.
- 5 Thus saith Jehovah to the Prophets, Who deceive my people, And bite with their teeth, and cry, “Peace;” And when any one putteth not in their mouth, Against him they declare war;
- 6 Night shall therefore be to you instead of a vision, And darkness shall be to you instead of divination;’ And set shall the sun on the Prophets, And darkened over them shall be the day: (227)
- 7 And ashamed shall be the seers, And confounded shall be the diviners; And they shall all cover their lips, For there will be no answer from God.
- 8 But I indeed am filled with power, By the Spirit of Jehovah, yea, with judgment and courage, To declare to Jacob his wickedness, And to Israel his sin.
- 9 Hear this, I pray, ye princes of the house of Jacob, And ye rulers of the house of Israel, Who abominate judgment, And all rectitude pervert; (237)
- 10 Who build Zion by blood, And Jerusalem by iniquity.
- 11 Its princes judge for reward, And its priests for wages teach, And its prophets for money divine; And on Jehovah they lean, saying, “Is not Jehovah in the midst of us? Come upon us shall no evil.”

12 Therefore for you Zion as a field shall be plowed, And Jerusalem shall be a heap, And the mount of the house as the heights of a forest.

CHAPTER 4

- 1 But it shall be in the last days, That the mount of the house of Jehovah Shall be set in order on the top of the mountains, And elevated shall it be above the hills; And assemble there shall nations; (252)
- 2 And go shall many nations and say,— “Come and let us ascend to the mount of Jehovah, And to the house of the God of Jacob; And he will teach us of his ways, And we will walk in his paths:” For from Zion shall go forth a law, And the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem;
- 3 And he will rule among many people, And convince strong nations afar off; (260) And beat their swords shall they into plowshares, And their spears into pruninghooks; And lift up shall not a nation against a nation a sword, And they shall learn war no more;
- 4 And they shall sit everyone under his own vine, And under his own fig-tree; And none will there be to terrify them; For *thus* hath the mouth of Jehovah of hosts spoken.
- 5 For all people shall walk, Every one in the name of his god; (271) But we will walk In the name of Jehovah our God forever.
- 6 In that day, saith Jehovah, I will assemble the lame, And the driven out will I gather, And her whom I have afflicted:
- 7 And I will make the lame a remnant, And the driven out a strong nation; Reign over them shall Jehovah on mount Zion, From henceforth, even forever.

- 8** And thou tower of the flock, The fortress of the daughter of Zion, To thee it shall come; Yea, come shall the former dominion; The kingdom, to the daughter of Jerusalem.
- 9** Why dost thou now cry with a loud crying? Is there no king in thee? Has thy counselor perished? For seized thee has pain as one in travail.
- 10** Be in pain, and groan, O daughter of Zion, As a woman in travail; For go forth shalt thou from the city, And thou shalt dwell in the field, Yea, thou shalt go as far as Babylon; There shalt thou be delivered, There shall Jehovah redeem thee From the hand of thy enemies.
- 11** And now gathered against thee are many nations, Who say, “Let her be condemned, And look shall our eye on Zion.” (284)
- 12** But they know not the thoughts of Jehovah, And understand not his counsel; For he shall gather them as a handful to the floor.
- 13** Arise, and thrash, thou daughter of Zion; For thy horn will I make iron, And thy hoofs will I make brass; And thou shalt tear in pieces strong nations; And consecrate to Jehovah their wealth, And their substance to the Lord of the whole earth.

CHAPTER 5

- 1** Assemble now thyself, thou daughter of a troop; A siege has he set against us: (294) With a rod shall they smite on the cheek the judge of Israel.
- 2** And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, Art small to be among the thousands of Judah! From thee shall to me come forth One to be a ruler in Israel; And his goings forth *are* from the beginning, From the days of ages.
- 3** He will therefore give them up till the time, When she who travails shall bring forth, And return to the children of Israel Shall the residue of his brethren:

- 4** And he shall stand and feed in the power of Jehovah, In the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God; And they shall quietly dwell, For he shall now be magnified to the ends of the earth.
- 5** And he shall be *our* peace; When the Assyrian shall come into our land, And when he shall tread in our palaces, Then we shall set up against him seven shepherds, And eight princes of men;
- 6** And they shall lay waste The land of the Assyrian by the sword, And the land of Nimrod by their swords; (311) And he will deliver us from the Assyrian, When he shall come into our land, And when he shall tread in our borders.
- 7** And the residue of Jacob shall be, Among the nations, in the midst of many people, As a dew from Jehovah, as drops of rain on the grass; Which tarries not for man, nor waits for the sons of men.
- 8** The residue of Jacob shall also be, Among the nations, in the midst of many people, As a lion among the beasts of the forest, As a young lion among a flock of sheep, Who, when he passes through, tears and carries away, And no one can deliver.
- 9** Exalted shall be thy hand above thine enemies, And all thine adversaries shall be cut off.
- 10** And it shall be in that day, saith Jehovah, That I will cut off thy horses from the midst of thee, And I will destroy thy chariots;
- 11** And cut off will I the cities of thy land, And will overthrow all thy fortresses;
- 12** And I will cut off diviners from thine hand, And soothsayers shall not be to thee;
- 13** And cut off will I thy graven images, And thy stature from the midst of thee, And thou shalt no more bow down Before the work of thy hands;
- 14** And I will demolish thy groves from the midst of thee, That I man destroy thine enemies;

15 And in anger and fury will I execute on the nations A vengeance,
which they have not heard.

CHAPTER 6

- 1 Hear ye now what Jehovah saith,— “Arise, contend before the mountains, And let the hills hear thy voice.”
- 2 Hear, ye mountains, the controversy of Jehovah, And ye strong foundations of the earth; For Jehovah has a controversy with his people, And with Israel he will contend:—
- 3 ”My people! What have I done to thee? And in what have I molested thee? Testify against me.
- 4 I have indeed made thee to ascend from Egypt, And from the house of servants I redeemed thee; I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.
- 5 My people! Remember now What Balak, the king of Moab, consulted, And what Balaam, the son of Bosor, answered him, *And what happened* from Shittim even to Gilgal, That thou mayest know the righteousness of Jehovah.” (336)
- 6 ”Wherewith shall I approach Jehovah? *And* bow down myself before the high God? Shall I approach him with burnt-sacrifices? With calves a year old?
- 7 Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams? With ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born as my sin-offering? The fruit of my loins as an expiation For the wickedness of my soul?”—
- 8 He hath declared to thee, O man, what is good: And what does Jehovah require from thee, But to do justice, and to love mercy, And to humble thyself to walk with thy God?
- 9 The voice of Jehovah crieth to arouse; And the man of understanding will see his name: Hear ye the rod, and who testifies of it.

- 10** Are there still in the house of the wicked The treasures of iniquity, And the scanty detestable measure?
- 11** Shall I justify balances of wickedness, And the bag of deceitful weights?
- 12** For her rich men have filled themselves by violence, And her inhabitants have spoken falsehood, And their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.
- 13** And I also by smiting will afflict thee, And thee will I destroy for thy sins: (352)
- 14** Thou shalt eat and not be satisfied, And thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee; And thou shalt lay hold, and not deliver, And what thou deliverest will I give up to the sword:
- 15** Thou shalt sow and not reap, Thou shalt press the oil, and not anoint thyself with oil, And the new wine, and not drink wine.
- 16** For observed are the statues of Omri, And every work of the house of Ahab; And ye walk in their counsels, That I should make thee a desolation, And her inhabitants an hissing; And the reproach of my people ye shall bear.

CHAPTER 7

- 1** Woe is me! For I am as the ingatherings of summer, And as the bunches of the vintage: There is no cluster to eat; The ripe fruits my soul hath desired. (360)
- 2** Perished has the meek from the land, And upright among men there is none; For all lie in wait for blood, Every one hunts his brother with a net.
- 3** To effect the wickedness of their hands, The prince asketh, and the judge also, for reward. And the great man speaks himself Of the mischief of his soul; and they wrap it up. (365)

- 4** The good among them is like a brier, The upright is worse than a thorn-hedge: The day of thy watchmen, thy visitation, is coming; They shall be their confusion.
- 5** Trust not a friend, put no faith in a counselor; From her who sleepeth in thy bosom, Guard the openings of thy mouth:
- 6** For the son dishonors his father, The daughter rises up against her mother, The daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; Enemies to man are his own domestics.
- 7** But I to Jehovah will look, I will wait for the God of my salvation; Hear me will my God.
- 8** Rejoice not thou over me, my enemy; (374) Though I have fallen, I shall rise again; When I sit in darkness, Jehovah will be my light.
- 9** The wrath of Jehovah will I bear, (For I have sinned against him,) Until he plead my cause, And execute judgment for me; He will bring me to light, I shall see his righteousness:
- 10** And see shall my enemy, And cover her shall shame, who said to me,— “Where is Jehovah thy God?” Mine eyes shall see her; And now trodden shall she be as the mire of the street.
- 11** The day to build thy walls! That day shall remove far the decree:
- 12** And in that day to thee shall they come From Assyria and the cities of the fortress, From the fortress also to the river, (386) And from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain,—
- 13** But the land shall become a desolation, On account of its inhabitants, For the fruit of their works.
- 14** Feed thy people by thy crook, Thy flock of thy heritage, Who dwell in solitude, in the wood, As in the midst of Carmel; They shall be fed in Bashan and Gilead, As in the days of old. (392)
- 15** As in the days of thy going forth from the land of Egypt, I will show to him wonderful things.

- 16** Shall see the nations, And be ashamed of all their might; They shall lay their hand on their mouth, Their ears shall become deaf;
- 17** They shall lick the dust as a serpent, As reptiles of the earth shall they move from their holes; Jehovah our God shall they dread, And they shall be afraid of thee.
- 18** What God is like thee, Taking away iniquity, And passing over transgression, As to the remnant of his heritage? He will not retain forever his anger, For he loveth mercy:
- 19** He will return, he will have mercy on us; He will tread down our iniquities, And cast into the depths of the sea all their sins:
- 20** Thou wilt grant truth to Jacob, Mercy to Abraham; Which thou hast sworn to our fathers In the days of old.

FOOTNOTES

PREFACE

- ^{ft1} The confusion of the name has been through the Septuagint, in which *Michaiah*, the son of Imlah, about a hundred years before, is rendered *Μιχαίας*, as well as this Prophet. The son of Imlah in Hebrew is *מיכיה*, while our Prophet is *מִיכָה*.—*Ed.*
- ^{ft2} “This Book,” says *Henderson*, “may be divided into two parts; the first consisting of chapters 1-5; and the second, the two remaining chapters, which are more general and didactic in their character.”

CHAPTER 1

- ^{ft3} It is probable that the greater part of his Prophecy was written in the days of this king; for a portion of what is contained in the *third* chapter is referred to in ^{<242618>} Jeremiah 26:18, 19, as having been delivered “in the days of Hezekiah.”—*Ed.*
- ^{ft4} “He mentions Samaria first,” says *Marckius*, “not because it was superior to Jerusalem, or more regarded by the Prophet, but because it would be first in undergoing judgment, as it had been first in transgression.” The preposition *על* is rendered by some, “against,” and not “concerning.” *Calvin* renders it in his version *super*, and in his comment, *contra*.—*Ed.*
- ^{ft5} It was a village, according to *Eusebius* and *Jerome*, west of Jerusalem, near Eleutheropolis, not far from the borders of the Philistines. See ^{<061544>} Joshua 15:44; ^{<130421>} 1 Chronicles 4:21; ^{<140908>} 2 Chronicles 9:8; 14:10. There is another circumstance, besides that of his birth in the land of Judah, which tends to prove his special mission to the Jews,—he mentions in the first verse only the kings of Judah.—*Ed.*
- ^{ft6} *שמעו עמים כלם*, “Hear, ye peoples, all of them.” Were it not for a similar anomaly as to number in the following line, “Give ear, thou earth, and its fullness,” we might think that *כלן* is here a mistake for

כלכם, as it is evidently the case in <090604> 1 Samuel 6:4, and <181710> Job 17:10; for in these two places there are several MSS. Which have כלכם, though here there is no variety. Some, to get rid of the difficulty, have suggested that כלם here is to be construed as an adverb, “universally,” regarding it as assuming the same form with חנם, “gratuitously,” and ריקם, “vainly.” But such irregularity is common in Hebrew; there is therefore no need of having recourse to such expedients.

The word עמים, peoples, may be rendered nations: for, notwithstanding the dissent of *Drusius*, what *Horsley* says seems to be correct, that עם in the plural number designates the heathen nations, as distinguished from the people of Israel. The verse literally is this,—

*Hear, ye nations,—all of them;
Give ear, thou earth,—even its fullness;
And the Lord Jehovah shall be against you a witness
The Lord from the temple of his holiness.—Ed.*

^{ft7} These two similes, as observed by *Marckius* and others, refer not to the same thing, but to the two things previously mentioned,—the wax, to the mountains,—and the waters, to the valleys. This kind of order, in a sentence, is common in Hebrew. The *Septuagint* presents an instance, not uncommon, of an attempt to reconcile what, from not apprehending the sense, appeared incongruous; for *motion* is ascribed to the mountains—σαλευθησεται τα ορη, and *melting* to the valleys—τακησονται, quite contrary to the meaning of the words in Hebrew. *Newcome* renders the last line thus,—

“As waters poured down a steep place.”

Henderson renders the last word, “a precipice;” and *Marckius*, *declive*—“a declivity.” I would give this version of the whole verse,—

*For, behold, Jehovah shall go forth from his place;
Yea, he shall descend and tread on the high places of the land;
And dissolve shall the mountains under him,
And the valleys shall burst forth;
Like the wax before the fire,
Like waters rolling down a declivity.*

The verb בקע is applied to express the bursting out of waters from a fountain, of the young when emerging from the egg, and of light dispelling darkness. It is here in Hithpael, and only in one other place,

<060913> Joshua 9:13; where it means the bursting of wine bottles, made of leather. The word מורד is going down, descent, declivity, καταβασις, Sept. See <061011> Joshua 10:11; <244805> Jeremiah 48:5.

“Do men trust to the height and strength of mountains, as if they were sufficient to bear up their hopes and bear off their fears? They shall be molten under him.—Do they trust to the fruitfulness of the valleys and their products? They shall be cleft, or rent,—and be wasted away as the ground is by the waters that are poured down a steep place.”—Henry.

fit8 פשע, rendered *scelus* wickedness, by Calvin, means evidently defectio—defection—apostacy, as rendered by Junius and Tremelius. חטאות, transgressiones—transgressions, rather, sins. Several MSS. And the Septuagint have חטאת, sin; but the plural is more suitable to this place, to correspond with the high places at the end of the verse. It is evident, from the context that Jacob means Samaria or the ten tribes, and that the house, or family of Israel, means what is not usual, the tribe of Judah. (See <142819> 2 Chronicles 28:19.) Israel seems here to be taken as a special distinction of God’s people. Judah was still in the name of the true Israel, while the ten tribes were apostates from the faith.

It is better to adopt the future tense in this verse, that it may correspond with the preceding. When the auxiliary verb is supplied, it must ever be regulated as to its tense by the context. Then the first line should be,—

For the defection of Jacob shall all this be.

Or it may be rendered, “shall all these things be,” כל-זאת; for זאת is plural as well as singular; and παντα ταυτα is the rendering of the Septuagint.

Grotius and some others give this version of the four last lines,—

What is the origin of the defection of Jacob?

Is it not Samaria?

What is the origin of the high places of Judah?

Is it not Jerusalem?

Who or what is the defection of Jacob? No doubt means, Who is the author, or what is the cause or origin of his defection? It is the same

form of expression, as when it is said, that God is our salvation, that is, the author of it.—*Ed.*

^{ft9} פסילים, from פסל, to chip or cut with a tool. They were graven or carved images, made of wood, and overlaid with gold or silver.

“The *graven* image,” says *Bishop Horsley*, “Was not a thing wrought in metal by the tool of the workman we should now call an engraver; nor was the *molten* image an image made of metal. In fact, the graven image and the molten image are the same thing under different names. The images of the ancient idolaters were first cut out of wood by the carpenter, as is very evident from the Prophet *Isaiah*. This figure of wood was overlaid with plates, either of gold or of silver, or, sometimes perhaps, of an inferior metal. And, in this finished state, it was called a graven image, *i.e.*, a carved image, in reference to the inner solid figure of wood, and a molten, *i.e.*, an overlaid or covered image, in reference to the outward metalline case or covering; and sometimes both epithets are applied to it at once, ‘I will cut off the graven and molten image,’ ^{<340114>} *Nahum* 1:14.” See also ^{<050725>} *Deuteronomy* 7:25; ^{<233022>} *Isaiah* 30:22.—*Ed.*

^{ft10} The view given above is the one embraced by *Henderson*; but the reason given here is improbable. *Newcome* mentions the above, and also the following, “She imputed her wealth to her spiritual idolatry, and her conquerors shall distribute it as the reward of harlots in the literal sense.” But inasmuch as it is said, that her rewards would be burnt, it is more consistent to take the last clause as a proverbial expression, signifying the destruction of all the wealth that was ascribed to idolatry as its source.

“It is common,” says *Henry*, “that what is squeezed out by one lust, is squandered away by another.”—*Ed.*

^{ft11} All the verbs in this verse are in the Septuagint in the third person, **κουσεται**—“she will mourn,” etc. The whole is applied to Samaria. The Hebrew will admit of this sense, if the verbs be considered to be, as they may be, in Hiphil, the omission of the ך is not uncommon. Then the rendering of the two verses will be the following:—

***8. I will therefore make her to moan and howl,
I will cause her to go stripped and naked;
I will make her to moan like the whales,
And to wail like the ostriches:***

**9. For grievous will be her stroke;
Yea it will come even to Judah,
Reaching to the gate of my people—to Jerusalem.**

תַּנִּינִים, rendered “dragons” in our common version, and by Calvin, and by many others, is rendered “foxes” by *Newcome*, “wolves” by *Henderson*, but by *Bochart*, “whales,” or those species called “dolphins;” and *Professor Lee*, in his Notes on <184002> Job 40:25, seems to be of the same opinion. The mournful groans of the dolphins, when taken, are said to be extremely distressing; their doleful moanings, too, in the night, when at liberty, have been testified by historians.—בְּכִיתַת יְעִנָּה, “owls” in our version, is rendered both by *Calvin* and *Newcome*, “daughters of the ostrich,” and by *Henderson*, “ostriches.” The Septuagint has θυγατρων σειρηνων—“the daughters of sea-monsters:” στρουθοκαμηλων —“camel-sparrows—ostriches,” is the rendering of *Aquila* and *Symmachus*. The literal expression is, “the daughters of the ostrich,” meaning evidently the females. *Dr. Shaw*, as quoted by *Newcome*, says, “During the lonesome part of the night, they often make a very doleful and hideous noise. I have often heard them groan, as if they were in the greatest of agonies; an action beautifully alluded to by the Prophet Micah.”—*Ed.*

^{ft12} Or rather the stroke before mentioned; for the true reading is no doubt מַכְתָּהּ, her wound or her stroke, in the singular. Though there are but two MSS. Which have this reading, yet the previous participle noun, אֲנוּשָׁה, being singular, and the following verbs or participles being in the same number, favor this supposition. The corresponding word in the Septuagint is also in the singular number—ἡ πληγή αὐτης, her stroke, stripe or scourge.—*Ed.*

^{ft13} *Henderson* renders this clause, “weep not in Acco,” and mentions *Gesenius* and others, who consider that בכי is put here for בעכו, and Ocu or Acco was a town in the tribe of Asher; see <070131> Judges 1:31. The Septuagint favors this rendering, at least in one copy, for it has εὐακείμ, though in Judges the name is Ακχω.—*Ed.*

^{ft14} עָבְרִי לָכֶם, pass over or migrate, as to you. One MS. Has לך, as to thee; but the anomaly of number is common through all the Prophets. “The inhabitant” here is a poetical noun of number, including the whole people. What usage has thus sanctioned in one language, cannot at all

times be retained in another. We must in the present instance make “Inhabitant” in our language plural, or לַכֶּם, “as to you, or yea, you,” singular. The latter is the best mode. Then as to the peculiar form of לַכֶּם or לָךְ after an imperative, we have similar instances; see <011201> Genesis 12:1; <240505> Jeremiah 5:5; <280712> Hosea 7:12. It is an emphatic mode of speaking. The sentence here may be thus expressed, “Pass thou over, yea, thou, O inhabitant of Saphir.” Amaziah said to Amos, בָּרַח לָךְ, “Flee, yea, thou,” etc. Or to give to ל its most usual meaning, we may suppose “I say” to be understood; then it would be, “Flee, *I say*, to thee.”—*Ed.*

^{ft15} This verse is variously rendered; by *Newcome* thus,—

Pass on, thou inhabitress of Saphir, naked and in confusion.

The inhabitants of Zanan went not forth to wailing.

O Beth-Ezel, he shall receive of you the reward of his station against you.

By *Henderson* thus,—

Pass on, thou inhabitant of Shaphir, naked and ashamed;

The inhabitant of Zanan goeth not forth;

The wailing of Beth-Ezel will take away continuance from you.

It seems more consistent to take all the verbs in this and the preceding verse as imperatives, though they be not in the same person. Those in the second are evidently so; and I would render such as are in the third person as imperatives too. That Saphir, Zaanán, etc., as well as those which follow, are not appellatives, but proper names of places within or on the borders of Judah, is what is allowed by most, though not by all, especially by some of the ancient commentators, at least with regard to some of the names. I offer the following version of the tenth and eleventh verses,—

*10. In Gath declare ye it not, in Acco weep not;
In Beth-Ophrah, roll thyself in dust:*

*11. Pass thou over, yea, thou, O inhabitant of Saphir,
Naked and in shame;*

*Let not the inhabitant of Zaanán go forth wailing;
Let Beth-Azel take from you its position;
that is, follow your example.*

The last word, עֲמַדָּתוֹ, presents the greatest difficulty. It is found here alone in this form. It occurs as עֲמֹד, a pillar, a station, עֲמוּד, a stand, stage, and as מֵעֲמָד, a standing, and also a state, <232219> Isaiah 22:19.

Buxtorf gives the same meaning to the last with the one in the text, *constitutio*, constitution, a fixed order of things. The verb עמד signifies to stand, to stand erect, to remain the same, either in motion or at rest, to continue. Hence it may rightly signify a position, a standing, that is taken and maintained.

^{ft16} *Grieving* is the idea commonly given to the verb here used. “Dolebit, will grieve,” *Grotius*,—“Parturit, travails,” *Marckius*,—“Pineth,” *Henderson*. *Newcome*, following the mere conjecture of *Houbigant* changes the original, and substitutes למות for לטוב, and gives this version,—“is sick unto death.” Not only is this wholly unwarranted, but it destroys the evident contrast there is in the verse—the good and the evil.—*Ed.*

^{ft17} The two lines of this verse are improperly connected, and the word “sons” is substituted for “houses,” בתי, and there are no various readings, and the Septuagint has “houses.” The literal rendering is this,—

*Therefore thou wilt send presents to Moresheth-gath:
The houses of Achzib will be a lie (i.e., false) to the kings of Israel.*

Henderson, after *Cocceius*, gives a different meaning to “presents,” שלוחים; and he renders it “divorce,” and says that it signifies letters of repudiation, and that it is to be taken here metaphorically for the breaking up of connection. The word only occurs in two other places, that is, in ^{<021802>} Exodus 18:2, and in ^{<110916>} 1 Kings 9:16; and in neither does it mean what is alleged.—*Ed.*

^{ft18} אבי, there is א left out, which is supplied in several MSS. It ought to be אביא which means, I will bring, rather than, I will send.

^{ft19} The instances of paranomasia or alliteration in this passage, including this line and the five preceding verses, are unparalleled in any other parts of the Prophets; and when there is no coincidence of sound in the words, there is sometimes a direct contrast in the ideas, as good and evil in verse 12.—*Ed.*

^{ft20} Of all the various renderings of this clause, this is the most satisfactory, which is that of our own version. The substitution of “honor” for “glory,” on the mere authority of the Targum, as is done by *Newcome*, is wholly indefensible.

Εως Οδαλαμ ἤξει την δοξην Ισραηλ, *Symmachus*. At the same time, the most obvious and natural construction of the clause is the following, though its meaning is obscure; To Adullam shall come the glory of Israel.—*Ed*.

^{ft21} Or, “children of thy indulgences or luxuries,” *i.e.*, luxurious children, rather than “darling children,” as rendered by *Henderson*. The Septuagint has τα τεκνα τα τρυφερα σου —”thy voluptuous children.” The version of *Newcome* is, “thy delicate children.” What seems to be intended is, their indulgence in pleasures and luxuries.—*Ed*.

CHAPTER 2

^{ft22} Literally, work; but פּעַל means to work not only with the hands, but also with the mind; and hence, to contrive, to devise, to machinate. *Henderson* has “fabricate,” while *Newcome*, less suitably, retains the word, “work.” *Marckius* justly observes, that the working here is not external but internal, the framing, the setting in order, the preparation of evil in the mind. The Prophet points out here that source from which outward evils proceed. What numberless schemes, both good and evil, are concocted and arranged by men on their beds! “They set their wits on work to invent ways of accomplishing their desire. They devise iniquity with a great deal of cursed art and policy; they plot how to do it effectually, and yet so as not to expose themselves. This is called working evil; they are working it in their heads.”—*Henry*.

^{ft23} The original is, כִּי יֵשׁ-לְאֵל יָדָם. *Marckius* after having referred to *Calvin’s* version, says, that he prefers that of *Junius* and *Tremelius* which is as follows: “Quum est in potestate manus ipsorum—When it is in the power of their hand,” כִּי is taken as an adverb of time. The phrase is found in four other places,—^{<013129>} Genesis 31:29; ^{<052832>} Deuteronomy 28:32; ^{<160505>} Nehemiah 5:5; and ^{<200327>} Proverbs 3:27. So that to render אֵל here “God,” as it is done by the Septuagint, Theodoret, and Jerome, and some others, must be wrong. כִּי is rendered “because” both by *Newcome* and *Henderson*, but not so suitably as to the sense.—*Ed*.

ft24 This verse presents an instance of parallelism not uncommon, in which the first and the last line correspond, and the second and the third; as will be seen in the following version:—

*And they covet fields and forcibly seize them,
And houses, and they take them away;
Yea, they oppress the young man and his house,
And the old man and his inheritance.*

There must be some distinction between גִּבּוֹר, which I render, “the young man,” and אִישׁ, rendered above, “the old man.” The first means, robust, strong; and the second is a common term for man, but sometimes signifies a husband, and also a man in years. We may, indeed in harmony with the passage, consider the first as meaning a householder, and the latter as signifying a husbandman. The fields in the first line are the same with the inheritance in the last: and houses and a house are mentioned in the two intervening lines.—*Ed.*

ft25 The word מִשְׁפָּחָה, family, no doubt designates the people of Israel, so called, either for their descent from the same father, or for their adoption by God as his people, designed to live in subjection to him as a family to its head.—*Ed.*

ft26 Very similar is the description of מִשָּׁל by *Lowth* in his *Praelections*; he describes it as that style which is sententius, figurative, and sublime—*Sententiosum, figuratum, et sublime docendi genus*. He says also that the word means often a saying, an axiom, a short sentence compactly formed—*est quoevis sententia sive axioma scite graviterque dictum, paucis concinnatum, et ad* *ἁνωμῶν* *firmitate compositum*, ^{<092414>} 1 Samuel 24:14, Prael. 4. And this is evidently its meaning here, —a common saying, everywhere known.—*Ed.*

ft27 Most commentators agree as to the general meaning of this verse, which is clearly stated here: but their versions differ. *Newcome*, following the Septuagint, renders the verbs in the first and second lines in a passive sense, but *Henderson* gives them an active meaning, supplying “one” as the nominative case, *i.e.*, the person, who utters the lamentation afterwards mentioned. The two last lines are the most difficult. *Marckius* has this version,—

*Quomodo subtraxit mihi!
Avertenti agros nostros distribuit!*

That of *Junius* and *Tremelius* is essentially the same, only the verbs are put in the present tense. *Newcome*'s rendering is this,—

***How hath he withdrawn it form me!
To an apostate he hath divided our fields!***

To call the king of Babylon an apostate, seems incongruous, as it cannot be applied to any one but who has turned away from true religion. The most obvious and literal rendering is that given by *Marckius*, with the exception of the tense. I offer the following version of the whole verse, with no alteration in the text, except the supplying of a ך before אָמַר which is found in several MSS.,—

***In that day shall be taken up concerning you a proverb,
And lament a lamentation will the oppressed,
And say will the desolate,—”We are destroyed,
The portion of my people he changes;
How he takes away from me!
To the alienator of my fields he divides them!***

It is a proverb, a common saying, and a lament, that would be uttered, as the Prophet foretells, at the time of the expulsion of the people from the land, when it would be taken possession of by their enemies.—*Ed.*

^{ft28} *Newcome*, apparently on the authority of the Septuagint, joins a part of the last verse to this, and gives this rendering,—

***In the congregation of Jehovah prophesy not, O ye that prophesy:
They shall not prophesy to these:
For he shall remove from himself reproaches.***

The last line he applies to the true prophet, that he would not subject himself to disgrace by exercising his office. *Henderson*'s version is the following:—

***Prophesy not; those shall prophesy
Who will not prophesy of these things:
Reproaches are incessant.***

This is viewed as being altogether the language of the people, interdicting the true prophets, specifying those whom they approved, and deprecating the reproaches cast upon them by the true prophets. Another version, which is materially adopted by *Calvin*, is admitted by our Author as not unsuitable, but he prefers the one given above. The main objection is to the last line, which in the original is this,—

לֹא יִסַּג כְּלָמוֹת

The last word is plural, and means reproaches; and the verb **יִסַּג** is in the third person of the future tense, and may be derived either from **סָגַג**, to recede, to depart, or from **גָּסַג**, to remove, both in a transitive and intransitive sense. Having an objective case, it cannot be the first verb, and must be the second in its transitive meaning. Then the rendering is, He will not, or let him not, or let none remove reproaches. This being the literal rendering of this sentence, we must now consider what version of the former part will correspond best with it. It is that no doubt adopted by Calvin, though the last clause cannot admit of the meaning he attaches to it. The people say, “Prophesy ye not who prophesy;” God answers, “They shall not prophesy to these;” and then the Prophet adds, speaking of God, “He will not remove reproaches;” that is, he will not remove them by his prophets with the view of amending their reproachful conduct.

The last clause is evidently viewed as an anomalous construction by *Henderson*; for he renders it as though the plural noun were the nominative case to the verb in the singular number, and this because the latter precedes the former. There may be instances of this in Hebrew, but it is by no means a common usage; though it be so in the *Welsh* language, which in so many of its peculiarities is very much like Hebrew. This sort of construction is the ordinary one in that language: a plural noun has commonly a verb in the singular number, when placed before it. This sentence in Welsh would be exactly the same as in Hebrew—*Nid ymadawa gwaradwyddiadau*. The noun in the plural number is the nominative case to the preceding verb, which is in the singular number, and the verb too is in the future tense, and is yet understood as having the meaning of the present tense.—*Ed.*

^{ft29} *Newcome*, adopting **רָאֵמָה**, as found in four MSS., renders the first part of the verse as the language of the people, though not in the sense of those referred to by Calvin. His version is as follows:—

*Doth the house of Israel [Jacob] say,
“Is the Spirit of Jehovah straightened?
Are these his doings?”*

“Straightened,” *i.e.*, confined to a few, such as Micah. And by “doings,” he means the judgments before announced. *Henderson* regards the “doings,” or, as he renders them, “operations,” in the same

light, though he views the words as spoken by the Prophet, and renders the first line thus,—

What language, O house of Jacob!

The first word, **הַאָמֹר**, as it is in our text, is viewed by *Henderson*, as well as by *Marckius*, as a passive participle, signifying *what is said or spoken*, and the **ה** prefixed is considered as a note of exclamation. But the objection made to our common version is not valid, that **אָמַר** in Niphael, when it means *being called or named*, has uniformly an **ל** after it, for we have an instance to the contrary in ^{<240732>}Jeremiah 7:32, **עוֹד הַתִּפַּח וְלֹא-אָמַר**, “and it shall no more be called Tophet.”—*Ed.*

^{ft30} *Newcome* gives the same meaning to this part of the line, though another to the former part,—

But of old my people hath risen up as an enemy.

Henderson's version is the same. The word rendered “of old” means “yesterday,” and expresses often past time indefinitely. It is once rendered “of old,” ^{<233033>}Isaiah 30:33; but in other places, “heretofore,” “in times past;” but “formerly,” or “of late,” would be the most suitable expression in this passage.—*Ed.*

^{ft31} The literal rendering of these two lines may be given thus:—

*From off the garment the mantle ye shall strip
From those who pass by securely, returning from war.*

Or the last words, **שׁוֹבֵי מִלְחָמָה**, “averters of war,” may designate people of a peaceable disposition, and “war” may be taken for strife or contention; then the rendering would be, “who turn away from contention.” *Newcome*, on the authority of one MS., which has **שְׁבִי**, gives this version, “captives of war,” which seems unsuitable to this passage. *Marckius* renders the phrase thus, *aversi belli, seu, a bello*, “turning away from war,” or, “shy of war.” This view evidently comports best with the context.—*Ed.*

^{ft32} This verse presents several anomalies. We have “women” and the verbs in the plural, and then “house,” “her delights,” and “her children.” It may be thus rendered,—

*The women of my people ye drive away,
Each from the house of her delights;
From off her children ye take away my ornament forever.*

The word rendered in our version “flory,” is **הדר**, which means ornament, beauty. *Piscator* says, *pulchras vestes quas Deus illis donavit*— “the beautiful garments which God gave them.” God claimed the land of Canaan and all its blessings as his own. They took these away without restoring them according to the law. *Henderson* justly observes, that “ornament” is to be taken “collectively for the ornamental clothes which they wore, and with which they had been provided by Jehovah.”—*Ed.*

^{ft33} The original is **תחבל וחבל נמרץ**, which, according to Parkhurst, is, “It is bound;” that is, bound over to punishment, “and the bond is grievous;” or, as it may be rendered, strong; which is only found in Niph'al in two other places, ^{<110208>} 1 Kings 2:8; ^{<180625>} Job 6:25. In the first it is rendered, grievous,—“a grievous crime,” and in the second, forcible,—“How forcible are the right words!”

But most others attach the idea of corruption and destruction to **חבל**: and *Newcome* takes the verb here in a passive sense, and gives this rendering of the distich,—

*“Because it is polluted, it shall be destroyed,
And the destruction shall be great.”*

Some render the verb actively, “It,” *i.e.* the land, “shall destroy you,” a reference being made, as it is thought, to what is said in ^{<031825>} Leviticus 18:25. The version of Marckius is this,—

*“Quando quidem impuritas corrumpet,
Et corruptio acris.”—*

*Seeing that impurity will destroy it,
And a violent destruction.*

The previous word **טמאה** is here taken as a noun. But the most literal, and the most satisfactory, is the rendering of *Newcome*.—*Ed.*

^{ft34} Perhaps a more literal rendering would be thus,—

*If a man, the follower of the spirit and of deception,
Speaks falsely, “I will prophesy to thee of wine and of strong drink,”
He then becomes the prophet of this people.*

To walk after, or to follow, “the wind,” as some render רוח, seems by no means proper. The phrase means the same as “the man of the spirit” in ^{<280907>}Hosea 9:7. *Newcome* changes the whole form of the passage, though not the meaning, except in one instance. Guided by the Syriac version, Houbigant and the Septuagint, without the sanction of any MS., he gives this version,—

*If a man, walking in the spirit of falsehood and lies,
Prophesy unto thee for wine and for strong drink,
He shall be the prophet of this people.*

He puts “for wine,” etc., and not “of wine:” but the latter rendering is much more suitable to the context.—*Ed.*

CHAPTER 3

^{ft35} *Calvin* is not singular in his view of this passage. *Scott* takes the same view, while *Henry* regards the passage as containing a promise, and so do *Marckius*, *Newcome*, and *Henderson*. But some have considered the words as those of the false prophets, referred to in the eleventh verse, and that *Micah* answers them in the next chapter. There is no sufficient ground for this opinion. Of those who regard the passage as including a promise, some apply it to the restoration from the Babylonian captivity, and others to spiritual restoration by the gospel. But the passage, viewed by itself, and in its connection with the next chapter, bears evidently the appearance of a commination: there are especially two words which manifestly favor this view,— תהימנה and הפרץ; both are taken generally, if not uniformly, in a bad sense. The first means to tumultuate, to be turbulent and riotous, to be clamorous and noisy; the second signifies to demolish, to break through, to destroy, and in every instance in which it is found as a personal noun, it means a destroyer or a robber.—See ^{<191704>}Psalm 17:4; ^{<261810>}Ezekiel 18:10; ^{<271114>}Daniel 11:14. The first is a verb in the second person plural of the future tense, and in the feminine gender, because of the comparison made in the former lines to sheep and a flock. The verbs in the 12th verse are all in the future tense, and the two first in the 13th are in the past, according to what is common in prophecies, but must be rendered as futures. I propose the following version of the passage,—

12. *Gathering, I will gather Jacob, the whole of thee;
Assembling, I will assemble the residue of Israel;
Together will I set them as the sheep of Bozrah,
As a flock in the midst of its fold;—
Ye shall be more noisy than men.*

13. *Ascend shall the breaker in the sight of them,
—they shall break through,
And pass the gate, yea, they shall go forth through it,
And pass shall their king before them,
And Jehovah shall be at their head,
or, for their leader.—Ed.*

ft36 קצינים, from קצה, to cut off to sever, to separate: they were those who were *separated* from others, as leaders of an army, rendered in our version, captains, rulers, <061024> Joshua 10:24; <232203> Isaiah 22:3.—Ed.

ft37 Some, such as *Marckius*, and also *Grotius*, take another view of this sentence: Is it not for you, who judge and punish others, to know the judgment of God, which awaits you? But most agree in the view given here.—Ed.

ft38 *Their* skin, literally. The antecedent (which is not unusual in Hebrew) is mentioned afterwards: it is the word, people, which follows.

The idea of sheep or flock, to which the people are compared in the last chapter, is still retained here. *Adam Clarke* quotes from *Suetonius* a striking answer of Tiberius, the Emperor, to some governors, who solicited him to increase the taxes,—”It is the property of a good shepherd to shear his sheep, not to *skin* them”—*Boni pastoris esse tondere pectus, non deglubere.*

To “hate good, and to love evil,” in the former sentence, betokens a character dreadful in the extreme; for good here, טוב means kindness, benevolence, the doing of good to others; this they *hated*: and evil, רעה, means wrong, mischief, injury, the doing of harm, of wrong, and of injustice to others; and this they *loved*. How transmuted they were in their spirit into that of very fiends! “They hate to do good, hate to have any good done, and hate those that are good; and they love the evil, delight in mischief, and in those that do mischief.” These words of *Henry*, no doubt, convey a correct view of the sentence. It might therefore be rendered, “Haters of benevolence, and lovers of mischief.”—Ed.

ft39 “Under the similitude of butchers the Prophet sets forth their savage cruelty: 1. They take off the skin; 2. They eat the flesh; 3. They break the bones, to pick out the marrow. The insatiable avarice of the princes is described.”—*Cocceius*.

ft40 There is nothing in the context to which **וְנִסְּ**, then, or at that time, can be referred, except to the two concluding verses of the last chapter, which ought not to have been separated from this. And this connection confirms the view, that these two verses contain not a promise but a threatening. The same time is meant by **וְנִסְּ** as by **בַּעַת הַהִיא** in the following part of the verse; for it is usual with the Prophets to express generally or indefinitely at first what they afterwards more distinctly specify.—*Ed.*

ft41 Literally, “As they have rendered evil their deeds,” or, to coin a corresponding word, As they have evilized their deeds. To render their deeds evil was to render them afflictive, injurious, and oppressive to others, according to what has been previously described. Hence the following version of *Henderson* is incorrect,—

Because they have corrupted their doings.—Ed.

ft42 “Who deceive my people,” is better than, “Who cause my people to err,” according to *Newcome* and *Henderson*; for what is referred to is the “peace,” promised by the false prophets. *Marckius*’ version is, “Who seduce my people,” and he makes this remark, —that the people had three seducers,—the devil, their own deceitful hearts, and the false prophets.—*Ed.*

ft43 The expression, “to bite with the teeth,” is singular, when understood to signify voraciousness, as evidently it does here; for the corresponding words in the next distich, “who put not into their mouth,” seem to require this meaning. Almost all critics, except some of the Greek Fathers, who followed the Septuagint, agree in attaching to this import to the sentence. The paraphrase of Rabbi *Jonathan* is, “To him who offers to them a feast of meat, they prophesy peace.” *Jerome*’s view is the same. *Dathias* gives this paraphrase, *dum illis datur quod edunt*—“While is given them something to eat.”

Henry’s comment is much to the purpose,—“They will flatter and compliment those who will feed them with good bits, will give them something to eat; but as for those who put not into their mouths, who

are not continually cramming them, they look upon them as their enemies; to them they do not cry, Peace, but even prepare war against them; against them they denounce the judgments of God: they preach either comfort or terror to men, not according as they are to God, but as they are to them; as the crafty priests of the Church of Rome, in some places, make their image either to smile or to frown upon the offerer, according as his offering is.”—*Ed.*

ft44 The original may be thus rendered,—

*But whosoever will not put into their mouth,
Even against him they will proclaim war.—Ed.*

ft45 That this is the meaning is evident from the two last lines of the verse. It is a kind of parallelism, in which the four lines contain the same idea or ideas, announced in the two first lines in one form, and in the two last another, with more clearness, and sometimes with something additional. The preposition כִּי has sometimes the meaning of *rather than*, but here, *instead of*. I would render the verse thus,—

*Therefore night shall be to you instead of vision,
And darkness shall be to you instead of divination:
Yea, set shall the sun upon the Prophets,
And darken upon them shall the day.*

Piscator gives the sense when he says, *Visio vestra mutabitur in noctem*—“Your vision shall be changed into night.”—*Ed.*

ft46 רְסֻמִּים, μαντεις, Sept. *fatidici*, soothsayers, diviners. It is used generally in a bad sense, while רוֹאֵי, seers is commonly used in a good sense; but here both words denote pretenders, the false prophets.—*Ed.*

ft47 The version of *Newcome* is, “They shall cover the mouth;” that is, as he adds in a note, “with part of the long eastern vesture. This action was a sign of being put to silence, of disgrace and dejection, <031345> Leviticus 13:45; <262417> Ezekiel 24:17, 22.” There is no reason to render mouth, beard, as some have done.—*Ed.*

ft48 *Jerome* renders “the Spirit of Jehovah” in the genitive case, which in meaning amounts to the same thing; but *Newcome* puts the words in apposition with “power.” The רִחַק before Spirit seems to betoken a difference in its connection with “filled.” It appears to be here a preposition, *ab*, *by*. The “power,” כֹּחַ, is the δυνάμις of the New Testament; and “judgment,” מִשְׁפָּט, is discernment or discrimination;

and “might” or courage, גבורה, is “an intrepid firmness of mind,” as Marckius observes, “against all opposing evils and hindrances.”—Ed.

ft49 Marckius renders it the same, *verè*, and says, that it is of the same import with *Amen, Amen*, so often used by our Savior. *Truly* is adopted by *Newcome* and *Henderson*.—Ed.

ft50 *Scelus*, פשע; it means defection, apostacy, rebellion, a willful transgression, and a proud contempt of divine law and institutions; it is ἀνομία—lawlessness, as it is sometimes rendered by the Septuagint. But “sin,” חטאה, is a deviation from what is right through delusion, mistaken views, error, ignorance, or infirmity. The first included idolatry and gross acts of imposture and oppression; the second, the superstition of the people, and their common vices. *Muis*, as quoted by *Leigh*, says that פשע is “defection from God or rebellion, and prevarication towards God,”—*defectio à Deo seu rebellio, ac praevaricatio in Deum*. And he quotes also *Mollerius* as describing חטאה as including not only sins of error, ignorance, and infirmity, but also those of omission, —*Ea potissimum peccata significat, quae vel errore, vel per ignorantiam, vel per infirmitatem carnis, committuntur; item peccata omissionis*.—Ed.

ft51 It is בנה, in the singular number, with no variation as to number in the MSS. The Septuagint gives it a plural participle, οἰκοδομουντες. It may be rendered as a participial noun, “The building of Zion is by blood,” etc., for ה, when radical, does not always turn into ה, when in regimine.—Ed.

ft52 It often happens, as in the present case, that the relative ה, in Hebrew, prefixed to a participle, has after it a verb in the future connected by ו, and in person different from that to which the relative refers. The relative here refers to a noun in the second, and the verb connected with the participle is in the third person. It is an idiom, of which there are frequent instances. We find the same to be the case with the relative אשך, in the third verse. It refers to the chiefs, who are addressed, and must therefore be viewed as in the second person, and all the verbs which follow it are in the third. Some render the participle, “who hate,” which is in Hiphil, in a causative sense. See ^{<300507>} Amos 5:7; 6:12. The distich may then be rendered thus,—

*Who render judgment hateful, (or, abominable,)
And distort everything that is right, or more literally,
And make crooked everything that is straight.—Ed.*

ft53 “They pretend,” says *Henry*, “in justification of their extortion and oppressions, that they build up *Zion* and *Jerusalem*; they add new streets and squares to the holy cities and adorn them; they establish and advance the public interests both in church and state, and think therein they do God and Israel good service; but it is with blood and with iniquity, and therefore it cannot prosper; nor will their intentions of good to the city of God justify their contradictions to the law of God.” A flaming zeal for a good cause can never consecrate extortion, injustice, and murder.

It may be asked, What is the difference between *Zion* and *Jerusalem*? *Zion* was the church, *Jerusalem* was the state; or it may be, that, according to the usual style of the Prophets, the more limited idea is given first, and the more extensive one is added to it.—*Ed.*

ft54 “As the *Masoretes*, in their division of the Bible, reckon the *Twelve Minor Prophets* but as *one Book*, they mark this verse (*twelfth* of chapter 3) the *middle* verse of these Prophets.”—*Adam Clarke*.

ft55 *Calvin* has *mercede* in both instances. The first in Hebrew is שֶׁחָד, a gift, a bribe; this was given to the princes: and the second is מַחִיר, a commutation, barter, price, something in exchange; this was given to the priests: and then what was given to the prophets is literally silver, כֶּסֶף; but it often means money in general. The Septuagint renders the first, μετὰ δῶρων—for gifts; the second, μετὰ μισθοῦ—for reward; and the last, μετὰ ἀργυρίου—for money. The princes decided matters according to the bribes given them, the priests, not satisfied with the regular allowance given them according to the law, did not teach except they were paid, had something in exchange, a reward for their trouble. And while the true prophets, who were extraordinary teachers sent by God, delivered their messages freely, without any pay, as they received them; the false prophets, who pretended that they came from God, required money for performing their office; see <240613> *Jeremiah* 6:13. And notwithstanding all their gains, all things were done badly. Money was extracted for doing wrong. The princes determined cases unjustly, the priests taught erroneous doctrine, and

the prophets prophesied falsely: and yet for all these evils, money was required! How ignorant and infatuated the people must have been!

Cocceius enumerated *six* things as chargeable on the persons mentioned in this verse: 1. Avarice—the seeking of wealth instead of doing God’s will; 2. A mercenary disposition, influenced by gain and not by sense of duty; 3. The exacting of unlawful reward; 4. The doing, even for reward, of what was evil and wicked; 5. A false pretense of trust in God; and, 6. The tying of God’s favor to external privileges.—*Ed.*

^{ft56} In unison with the foregoing are these striking remarks of *Henry*,—
”Many are rocked sleep in a fatal security by their church privileges, as if these would protect them in sin and shelter them from punishment, which are really, and will be, the greatest aggravations both of their sin and of their punishment. If men’s having the Lord among them will not restrain them from doing evil, it can never secure them from suffering evil for so doing; and it is very absurd for sinners to think that their impudence will be their impunity.”—*Ed.*

^{ft57} That is, the promise from repentance.—*Ed.*

CHAPTER 4

^{ft58} *In extremitate dierum*, באחרית הימים, in the posteriority or postremity of the days; εἰ εσχάτων των ημερων, in the last days.—*Sept.* “In the latter days,” or, “in the end of days.”—*Newcome.* “In the last of the days.”—*Henderson.* See ^{<242320>} Jeremiah 23:20; 30:24; ^{<263808>} Ezekiel 38:8; ^{<271014>} Daniel 10:14; ^{<280305>} Hosea 3:5. *Kimchi*, as quoted by *Lowth*, says, “Whenever the latter days are mentioned in Scripture, the days of the Messiah are always meant.”—*Ed.*

^{ft59} *Dispositus*, נכון—*constitus*, constituted—*praeparatus*, prepared—*firmitus*, made firm—are the words by which the term is commonly expressed. It comes from נכון, which *Leigh* justly says, means “aptly and timely to frame, and likewise to make firm and sure;” and he adds, “The word noteth *the ordering, perfecting, and fast establishing* of anything.” How suitably then it is here used: it is a mountain (which means evidently the Church) that is fitly framed, ordered, and firmly established.—*Ed.*

^{ft60} *Marckius* adduces the opinions of the ancients as to the signification of this “mount.” Some, such as *Tertullian*, *Jerome*, and *Augustine*, interpret it of Christ; while others, namely, *Origen*, the two *Cyrils*, and *Chrysostom*, regard it as signifying the Church; and with the latter most modern commentators agree. Here the consent of moderns exceeds that of the ancients; and it is no doubt sounder and wiser.—*Ed.*

^{ft61} *Convenient*, ונהרר, literally, “and flow;” ספטסטסט—hasten, *Sept.* It is flowing like that of a river, or of a strong current, and implies copiousness and spontaneity. “There shall be,” says Henry, “a constant stream of believers flowing in from all parts into the Church, as the people of the Jews flowed into the temple, while it was standing, to worship there.”

Kimchi says, that this word means to “run to what is pleasing or delightful,” —“*currere ad beneplacitum, hoc est, ad id quod cupias*. An old author, quoted by *Leigh*, says, that it implies abundance and celerity—*affluentiam cum celeritate*. It is rendered “flow together” in <245144> Jeremiah 51:44.

Instead of “peoples,” עמים, Isaiah has כל הגוים, “all the nations.” One MS. Has the same here, and three have כל before עמים, and this seems to be the correct reading. עם, in the plural number, is synonymous with גוים, meaning nations. The rest of this verse is exactly the same in the two Prophets, except that נכון, “prepared,” is differently placed, and הוא, “it,” is added by Micah after נשא, “exalted.”

In the second verse, which is the third in Isaiah, there is a complete verbal identity, except that גוים and עמים are reversed, and that ו before אל is wanting in Isaiah; but it is supplied in several MSS.

In the third, the fourth in Isaiah, there are verbal varieties in the two first lines, the four remaining are exactly the same with the exception of a paragodic ן, *nun*, added to a verb by Micah, and the verb ישא is singular in Isaiah. In the two lines referred to, there is also an addition of עד רחוק, “afar of,” in Micah.

Isaiah.

4. ושפט בין הגוים
והוכיחל עמים רבים

And he shall judge among the nation,
And shall convince many peoples.

Micah.

ושפט בין עמים רבים
החוכיח לגוים עצמים עד רחוק

And he shall judge among many peoples,
And shall convince strong nations afar off.

With this verse the passage ends in Isaiah; Micah adds another: and this, with the two other circumstances—that the passage is fuller and more connected with the context here than in Isaiah, may seem to favor the opinion that Isaiah, and not Micah, was the copyist; but the words, with which the passage is introduced in Isaiah, forbid such a supposition.

“Bishop Lowth, on ^{<230202>} Isaiah 2:2, thinks that Micah took this passage from Isaiah. It is true that he has improved it after the manner of imitators. Or, the Spirit may have inspired both with this prediction: or both may have copied some common original, the words of a Prophet well known at the time.—*Newcome*.

^{ft62} *Marckius* says, “*corde, ore, et opere*—with the heart, mouth, and in deed.”

^{ft63} כִּי, *ki*, for, or because: what follows contains the reason for the preceding promise. How could it be, that the mount of the house of Jehovah should be firmly fixed on the top of mountains, etc.? The answer is here given, “for go forth shall a law from Zion,” etc. And this was literally fulfilled at the commencement of the Gospel; it was first preached at Jerusalem: in consequence of this, the mount of Jehovah’s house, or the Church, was formed; and what is here predicted was in part fulfilled, and will no doubt be hereafter more completely fulfilled. It is said, “on top of the mountains,” not of a mountain. The Church was not to be confined to one place, but was to be preeminent throughout the earth. It was to be coextensive with the word that was to go forth from Zion.—*Ed*.

^{ft64} Both *Newcome* and *Henderson* render the כִּי, *vau*, here, *that*, “that he may teach us,” etc.: but it is better to retrain the most common meaning as a simple copulative, as it is done in our version, and by

Calvin, and by *Lowth* in *Isaiah*. The passage thus runs better, and more emphatically expresses the language of faith.—*Ed.*

^{ft65} So *Newcome* renders it; *Lowth* and *Henderson* read the same with our version, “the law.” The absence of the definite article is certainly no objection, as it is but seldom used in Hebrew. But “a law” is better except we render the copulative before “word,” even; and then we shall destroy the distinct character of the line. It appears that, according to the usual style of the Prophets, what the first line states indefinitely, is in the second specified, as being the “word of Jehovah.”

The word **תורה**, law, in Hebrew, is more comprehensive than the word law, in our language. It is derived from the Hiphil of **ירר**, which means to direct, to appoint, to instruct, to teach. Hence the noun, **תורה**, may be rendered, directory, institution, law, teaching, or doctrine. “It doth,” says *Leigh*, “not only signify strictly what is to be done, but it denoteth largely any heavenly doctrine, whether it be promise or precept.” It means often the whole of God’s revealed word, as in ^{<190102>} Psalm 1:2; ^{<19B9174>} Psalm 119:174, etc. See ^{<060108>} Joshua 1:8.—*Ed.*

^{ft66} There is a difference of opinion as to the nominative case to the verb “judge;” whether it be Jehovah in the preceding line, or the word of Jehovah. The most natural construction is the last supposition. *Jerome* and *Cyril*, as quoted by *Marckius*, refer it to the word of Jehovah, taking the word for Christ: but this cannot be admitted, as the law and the word seem to mean the same thing, and must be considered as the word of the Gospel; and *Justin Martyr* and *Irenaeus*, when referring to this passage regard it as such. And this is the view which *Marckius* seems to prefer. The rendering then would be,—

*And it shall judge among many people,
And convince strong nations afar off.*

^{ft67} The two verbs here used are **שפט**, to judge, and **הוכיח**, in Hiphil, to reprove. The first is to decide what is right and wrong, and also to defend the right and to punish the wrong; hence it means to arbitrate, and also to vindicate as well as to punish. The first sense is most suitable to this place.—The other verb does not occur in Kal, but in Hiphil, it means to make manifest, or show, by facts or by words, or by action; and hence it signifies to demonstrate, to convince, to

reprove, to chastise. The Septuagint often renders it by *ελεγχειν*, which, Parkhurst says, means, in its primary sense, to demonstrate by convincing reasons or arguments. *Lowth's* version in Isaiah is, "And shall work conviction," etc. *Newcome* renders it "convince." The rendering of *Henderson*, "give decision," is not to be approved. See ^{<431608>} John 16:8.—*Ed.*

^{ft68} "All these predictions must be confined to the nations converted by the word of Jehovah, and brought into Zion, that is, such as truly repent and believe, and must not be extended to all nations indiscriminately, or to all who embrace the Christian name, who are often as far as possible from the kingdom of Christ, inasmuch as they neither learn nor follow his doctrine.—*Marckius*.

^{ft69} *Marckius* views this passage differently. He considers that the converted Gentiles are meant here,—that when turned from their idols and their superstitions, they shall profess the true God, as revealed in the Gospel, and that each nation will regard him as its own God: however various in outward circumstances, they shall yet acknowledge the God revealed in his Word as their own. This view most certainly harmonizes better with the context than that of *Calvin*, which is commonly adopted. There is another, which is the same nearly in meaning, but founded on a different rendering of the words. The Jewish commentator *Abarbanel*, as quoted by *Marckius*, gives this version:—"Nam omnes populi, qui ambulabant quisque in nomine dei sui, et now ambulabimus in nomine Jehovae Dei nostri."

The words will no doubt admit of this construction; for it is often the case in Hebrew, that *לָלֶכֶת*, who, is understood before a verb in the future tense, especially when it has the meaning of the present, as here, for the preceding "ambulabant," might be rendered "ambulant," without any inconstancy in the meaning. I would therefore render the verse thus,—

*For all the nations,
Who walk each in the name of its god,
And we ourselves,
Shall walk in the name of Jehovah our God,
For ever and ever.*

The nations were then walking in the name of their multiplied gods; but at the time alluded to, both Gentiles and Jews would walk together in

the name of Jehovah. There is thus an entire correspondence between all the parts of this remarkable passage, which extends from the first verse to the seventh inclusive; a part of which, extending only to the end of the third verse, is to be found in Isaiah.—*Ed.*

ft70 לעולם ועד, “for ages and perpetually.” עולם means most commonly an indefinite, rather than an infinite time. The verb signifies to be hidden or concealed; and so the noun means an undefined and unknown period. “For ages,” would perhaps be its best version; whether these ages be limited or unlimited must depend on the context. Here עד is added to show that these ages would be endless, or to the end of time: for עד is “still,” unceasing futurity, that which is perpetual, still the same. The Levitical dispensation was לעולם “for ages,” but the new state of things promised here is to be, not only for ages, but also perpetually, that is to the end of time, while the world lasts.—*Ed.*

ft71 It means, doubtless, no more here; some refer it to halting between two opinions, between idols and God: but such an idea is foreign to the drift of this passage. It is the depressed, weak, or afflicted and miserable state of the Church that is here set forth.—*Ed.*

ft72 It is a Niphal participle from הלא, and corresponds in meaning with הנדחה, “the ejected,” in the last verse; only it is a stronger term, as it means one cast to a distance, while the latter signifies one cast or driven away. The first, as rendered by Junius and Tremelius, is *procul disjecta*, and the other is *depulsa*.—*Ed.*

ft73 “I think the temple is meant, or Jerusalem; the place where the flock, the whole congregation of the people assembled to worship God. *Newcome* retains the Hebrew word עדר, *eder*, a tower in or near Bethlehem, <013521> Genesis 35:21, or as some think, a tower near the sheep gate in Jerusalem. I believe Jerusalem, or the temple, or both, are meant; for these were considered the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, the fortress of the Jewish people.”—*Adam Clarke*. What especially confirms this view is, that the two clauses are in apposition, the latter is explanatory of the former.—*Ed.*

ft74 *Calvin* observes the order of the original, which is not done in our version. The whole verse may be thus rendered,—

*And thou tower of the flock,
The fortress of the daughter of Zion!
To thee it shall return;
Yea, come shall the former dominion,
The kingdom to the daughter of Jerusalem.*

The verb **שָׁבַח**, which I render “return,” means mostly, to come, to come near, to approach, to happen.—*Ed.*

^{ft75} *Tyne*, **עֵתָהּ**, is left out; nor is it restored in the comment. It should be, “For now thou shalt go forth from the city.”—*Ed.*

^{ft76} *Ingemisce*, groan, mourn, or sigh and sob. **גָּחַח**, burst forth, or break out; that is, into tears or mourning. “Bring forth,” as it is rendered by *Newcome* and *Henderson*, seems not to be the import of the word here. It may be rendered, as *Parkhurst* proposes, “labor and bring forth.”—*Ed.*

^{ft77} *Jam damnata erit*. *Newcome* renders the distich thus,—
*Who say, Let her be defiled,
And let our eye see its desire on Zion.*

Profaned, or defiled, it is no doubt the meaning of the verb. But it is better to retain the future tense here, though it may often, in the third person, be rendered as an imperative. To look on, is a Hebrew idiom, and means often to triumph or exalt over another, or to gain the upper hand. See ^{<192217>} Psalm 22:17; ^{<19B807>} Psalm 118:7. Several copies have the word for “eyes” in the singular number, as the verb is so: but anomalies of this kind often occur, as it is the case in Greek with respect to plural nouns in the neuter gender, and in Welsh, and when the verb precedes its nominative, almost in all instances. I offer the following version,—

*Who say, “Defiled shall she be,
And look on Zion shall our eyes.”—Ed.*

^{ft78} The beginning of these two lines is very emphatic: I would give this rendering,—

*But they—they know not the purposes of Jehovah,
And they understand not his counsel.*

It has been rendered, “But, as for them;” but this is flat, and too prosaic.—*Ed.*

ft79 *Manipulum*, a handful, a bundle of fruit; מַיִר, a sheaf,—a poetical singular for the plural—sheaves.—*Ed.*

ft80 *Horn*, in Scripture, means often elevation, dignity, power, strength. It means evidently in the last here. Zion was made strong to thrash the nations, and supplied with strong hoofs to tread on them. The Paraphrase of Rabbi Jonathan is to the purpose, *Fortes sicut ferrum, et robusti sicut aes*—”Strong as iron, and robust as brass.” And that this is the meaning is proved by what follows, *Thou shalt beat in pieces*, or beat small, or thrash out, *strong nations*.—*Ed.*

ft81 It is not often that Calvin passes over a sentence without noticing it, but he does so here; and it is this, *and thou shalt tear in pieces strong nations*. The verb is הִדְקוֹתָ, thou shalt beat small, or thrash out; see <232828> Isaiah 28:28; perhaps the latter sense is most suitable to the passage. The meaning is, that a complete subjugation will take place. To thrash and to thrash out, is to conquer and to bring thoroughly under subjection.—*Ed.*

ft82 The Hebrew word for this is חֵיל, and for “wealth” בַּעַע. The latter means gain, spoil, or what is often unjustly got, or what is scraped together and constitutes the wealth of the covetous; חֵיל is properly substance, including possessions of all kinds, land, cattle, etc. בַּעַע serves to include money, silver and gold; and חֵיל, everything else which makes up wealth.

The verb, “consecrate,” is in Hebrew in the first person, as it is in our version. There is no different reading; but the Septuagint and the earlier versions put it in the second person, to correspond with the previous verb, “Thou shalt beat in pieces.” There will be no difference in the sense, if we render it according to the Hiphil form, in which it is found,—”I will cause thee to consecrate.” *Jerome, Theodoret, Marckius, Dathius, Newcome, and Henderson*, adopt the second person.—This construction renders the passage no doubt more uniform.—*Ed.*

ft83 The word is very emphatic; it means to devote a thing to a purpose forever, so as to be unchangeably settled. חָרַם, says *Parkhurst*, “is anything *separated* absolutely from its common condition and *devoted* to Jehovah, so as to be incapable of redemption. See <032721> Leviticus 27:21, 28, 29. As a verb in Hiph. *To separate* or *devote* thus to

Jehovah. <032728> Leviticus 27:28, 29; <330412> Micah 4:12.” It is therefore a sacrilege to take merely to our own use what ought to be, or what we have, thus consecrated to the Lord.—*Ed.*

CHAPTER 5

ft84 *Calvin* has, in this division, followed the Septuagint, and so have the translators of our version. This verse, in Hebrew, belongs to the last chapter. *Marckius*, *Dathius*, and *Henderson*, follow the Hebrew division; *Junius*, and *Tremelius*, and *Newcome*, that of our version.

ft85 This verse has been variously interpreted. It is considered by most as connected with the last chapter. Some, as *Marckius*, consider it as an address to the Roman power; some, to the Babylonian; and others, to Jerusalem. The construction of it is the main point. The first verb, **וַתִּגְדְּדִי**, is found in six other places, and rendered in all, except in <240507> Jeremiah 5:7, to cut one’s self; but its other meaning, as in <240507> Jeremiah 5:7, and evidently here is to troop or band together; and the noun **גְּדוּד**, which follows, commonly means a band or a troop. The participle **שֹׁמֵר**, in the next clause, can refer to nothing in the text but to “the daughter of a troop.” The obvious and natural rendering of the verse would be the following,—

***Band thyself together, thou daughter of a band,
Laying against us a siege:—
With the rod shall they strike on the cheek
The judge of Israel.***

The daughter of a band or a troop means a military power, which collects bands or troops for warlike purposes. It is certainly more obvious to apply this to the Babylonian power than to Jerusalem, especially as the next line, “Laying against us a siege,” necessarily refers to the latter.

“The judge” is, as *Calvin* seems to take it, a poetical singular for the plural. No particular person is meant, as *Newcome* and others seem to think, but judges in general.—*Ed.*

ft86 This does not follow; for to say that it was “not the least,” is not to deny that it was “small.” There is, in fact, no contradiction in the expressions. *Matthew* quotes literally neither the Hebrew nor the

Septuagint version. The latter, in this case, agrees with the former. He gives the sense, but not the words, even in two instances besides this. Instead of “Ephratah,” he has, “in the land of Judah;” and instead of “Ruler,” he has, “Governor that shall rule,” or feed. The meaning in these three instances is the same, though the words are different. The place was, in former times, called Bethlehem-Judah, and also Ephratah. See ^{<013519>} Genesis 35:19; ^{<071707>} Judges 17:7; and ^{<080411>} Ruth 4:11.

The attempt by a question to produce similarity of expressions in the second line, according to what is done by *Marckius* and *Newcome*, is by no means to be approved. The literal rendering is the following:—

And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah!
Small to be among the thousands of Judah,—
From thee shall one to me come forth,
To be a Ruler in Israel:
And his going forth has been
From of old, from the days of ages.

The word for “going forth” is plural, which, as Calvin says, is sometimes used for the singular; but two MSS. Have it in the singular number, **מִצְאוֹתוֹ**. The last line in the Septuagint is as follows,—**απ αρχης, εξ ημερων αιωνος.**

“In every age, from the foundation of the world, there has been some manifestation of the Messiah. He was the hope, as he was the salvation, of the world, from the promise to Adam in paradise, to his manifestation in the flesh *four thousand* years after.”—*Adam Clarke*.—*Ed.*

^{ft87} **לכן**, *Grotius* renders it *certè*—surely: but *nevertheless*, as proposed by *Scott*, is the most suitable particle here. *Dathius* gives this paraphrase—*Verum quidem est*—True indeed it is.—*Ed.*

^{ft88} Until the time the begetting shall beget, (**יולדה ילדה**)
 And the remnant of his brethren shall be converted
 Together with the children of Israel.

Newcome gives this explanation of the verse,—”The sense is: God will not fully vindicate and exalt his people, till the Virgin-mother shall have brought forth her Son; and till Judah and Israel, and all the true sons of Abraham among their brethren, the Gentiles, be converted to Christianity.”—*Ed.*

^{ft89} By this arrangement of the sentence, *Calvin* evidently meant, that “his,” before “brethren,” refers to “Israel.” In the original, the latter clause is before the former, but in Hebrew, as well as in other languages, the antecedent sometimes comes after its pronoun.—*Ed.*

^{ft90} Most commentators differ from *Calvin* in their view of this verse, regarding it as a distinct prophecy of the Savior’s birth. There are difficulties on both sides: but taking the whole context, especially the following verse, we can hardly resist the conclusion, that Christ, born of a Virgin, is the subject. Indeed, the whole of this chapter, notwithstanding the reference to the Assyrian, is not capable of a satisfactory explanation, without applying what is said to Christ and his Church. Some things, no doubt, in the history of the Jews, may be alluded to, or incidentally mentioned; but the full accomplishment must be looked for in the new dispensation. And it is a splendid prophecy, in words often derived from customs and incidents among the Jews, of the birth of the Savior, and the character and extent, and blessedness of his kingdom, and the destruction of his enemies.

Newcome and *Adam Clarke* propose to divide the chapter after the first line in verse 5, thinking that a new subject is there introduced: but evidently the same subject, the Gospel dispensation, is continued to the end of the chapter. The Assyrian, the especial enemy of the ancient Church, designates the enemies of the Christian Church in all ages.

“As Sennacherib’s invasion,” says *Scott*, “was not repelled by the ruler or chieftains of Israel: nor did the Jews ever invade or waste the Assyrian dominions; it seems evident, that these expressions must be understood as mystically intending other enemies and persecutors of the Church, who should be of the same spirit with Sennacherib and the Assyrians.” *Henry*, who is much more learned critic and much profounder divine than what is commonly thought, agrees with *Scott*, and many others, in the interpretation of this chapter.—*Ed.*

^{ft90} “The Prophets prefaced their messages with, *Thus saith the Lord*; but Christ spoke not as a servant, but as a Son, *Verily, verily, I say unto you*: this was feeding in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; all power was given him in heaven and earth, a power over all flesh, by the virtue of which he still rules in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.”—*Henry.*

ft91 The order of the words in Hebrew is not strictly observed in this instance. There is here an example, not infrequent in the prophets, of the nominative case absolute,—

*And he shall be our peace:
The Assyrian—when he shall come into our land,
And when he shall tread in our palaces,
The raise shall we against him
Seven shepherds and eight anointed men.*

נְסִיכֵי אָדָם, literally anointed of men; but it is a phrase signifying men in authority, princes or sovereigns. נְסִיכִים is rendered *dukes* in <061321> Joshua 13:21, and *princes* in <198311> Psalm 83:11, and <263230> Ezekiel 32:30. It is not necessary to say “eight princes of men,” but, “eight princes,” or “eight anointed men.”—*Ed.*

ft92 It is by no means a safe rule, to draw a conclusion from the spiritual government as to what a temporal government should be. The subjects are guided by very different principles; and the same sort of government will not suit countries under different degrees of civilization. To theorize on this subject, as on many others, leads often to wrong conclusions. An hereditary sovereignty may seem to trench on liberty; but our own country exhibits an example where both exist to an extent unknown in the present or in any former age. Under no democracy has liberty ever been so freely and so fully enjoyed as in this land, which has been so wonderfully favored by a kind and gracious Providence. We owe, perhaps, far more than we are aware to an hereditary sovereignty.—*Ed.*

ft93 כַּפְתָּחַיָּהּ, in its openings or entrances: so most render the word. Ἐντός πολλῶν αὐτῆς—within its gates.—*Symmachus. Marckius, Newcome, and Henderson,* agree with our version. Calvin has, in this instance, followed Kimchi and Aben-Ezra: but the affix ת prevents us from adopting this meaning; besides, the word itself is nowhere found in this sense.

This verse is connected with the preceding, and ought to be separated from it only by a semicolon, and may be thus rendered:—

*And they shall waste the land of the Assyrian by the sword,
And the land of Nimrod at its entrances:
Thus shall he cause a deliverance from the Assyrian,
When he shall come into our land,
And when he shall tread on our borders.—Ed.*

ft94 There seems to be no necessity for this supposed inaccuracy in this comparison; it indeed changes the obvious meaning of the passage. The Jews are compared to the dew and rain, through which the grass grows; and then it is said, that the growth of the grass, not the dew or the rain, is not dependent on man, but on the dew or rain. The comparison is thus in every way suitable.—*Ed.*

ft95 We have the residue or remnant of Joseph in <300515> Amos 5:15,—the remnant of Israel in <330212> Micah 2:12,—and here in the following verse, the remnant of Jacob.—*Ed.*

ft96 “They shall be bold as a lion in witnessing against the corruptions of the times and places they live in, and strong as a lion in the strength of the Lord, to resist and overcome their spiritual enemies. *The weapons of their warfare are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds,* <471004> 2 Corinthians 10:4,5. They shall have courage which all their adversaries shall not be able to resist, <422115> Luke 21:15.”—*Henry.*

ft97 As a curious instance of ingenuity and extravagance in allegorizing, practiced by some of the Fathers, *Jerome’s* interpretation of this verse may be mentioned: the *horses* were lascivious lusts; the *chariots*, sins joined together in which the wicked, as it were, ride and triumph; the *cities*, such as that built by Cain, not like the heavenly Jerusalem; and the *strongholds*, were riches and the pomps of the world, the eloquence of orators and the tenterhooks of dialecticians!—*Ed.*

ft98 From כִּשְׁפֵי. “In Arabic,” says Parkhurst, “the verb signifies to *discover, disclose, reveal*, and is always in the Hebrew Bible applied to some species of *conjuring*.” The Septuagint render the word here φαρμακα, drugs or charms. They were enchanters or sorcerers, who applied drugs to magical purposes. See <143306> 2 Chronicles 33:6.—*Ed.*

ft99 The word here is מעוננים, from ענן, a cloud. Parkhurst renders it *cloudmongers*, who looked upwards to the clouds either on the flight of birds, or on the stars, or on meteors, and thereby pretended to foretell future things. Αποφθεγγομενους—oraclers—*Sept. Theodoret* renders it μαντιεις—soothsayers; and *Cyril* ψευδομαντιεις—false prophets. Some derive it from ענה, to answer; and others from עין, the eye; and hence, eyers or observers, either of times, or dreams, or of stars, or of birds.—*Ed.*

ft100 “Many of them depended much upon the conduct and advice of their conjurers, diviners, and fortune-tellers, and these God will cut off, not only as weak things, and insufficient to relieve them, but as wicked things, and sufficient to ruin them.”—*Henry*.

ft101 מצבות, rather pillars or columns than statues: τας στηλας in the *Sept.* The pillar of stone which Jacob set up is called by this name, <012818> Genesis 28:18. They were commemorative pillars at which the Canaanites, and afterwards the Jews, offered idolatrous worship. There was a pillar of this kind in the house of Baal, <121026> 2 Kings 10:26, 27. They were not altars, though altars might have been reared by them, for both are mentioned together in <051203> Deuteronomy 12:3. The word is derived from צב, to set, to fix firmly. The noun is rendered by *Parkhurst*, a standing pillar.—*Ed.*

ft102 *Scott*, speaking of the latter part of this chapter, says, “The reformation of the Jews after their return from Babylon might be alluded to; but the purification of the Christian Church from all antichristian corruptions of faith and worship, and all idolatry and superstition, seems more immediately to be predicted.”—*Ed.*

ft103 *Newcome* renders the word ערִיך, thine enemies, and not, thy cities, though he connects the verse differently,—more with the last than with the former portion of this,—

I will also destroy thine enemies:

*15. And I will execute vengeance, in anger and in fury,
Upon the nations which have not hearkened unto me.*

CHAPTER 6

ft104 *Henry* says, “Sin begets a controversy between God and man. The righteous God has an action against every sinner, an action of debt, an action of trespass, an action of slander.”

ft105 The verb is הלאאתיך, I have wearied, or caused thee to be weary. *Quo fatigavi te*—In what have I wearied thee? *Jun. and Trem.* Τι ελυπησα σε—how have I caused thee to grieve? *Sept.* *Quo labore te pressi*—with what labor have I oppressed thee? *Jerome.* This last contains the full meaning.—*Ed.*

ft106 The complete sentence is, “from the house of servants,” or rather, slaves: for they were not properly what we call servants, but slaves, in Egypt. The Septuagint has **ἐξ οἴκου δουλείας**—from the house of slavery. “The house of slaves,” is the version both of Newcome and of Henderson. They are the same words as we find in ^{<022002>}Exodus 20:2, rendered, “out of the house of bondage;” which ought to be translated slavery rather than bondage, if we depart from the literal rendering—the house of slaves.—*Ed.*

ft107 Various have been the ways to complete this evidently defective sentence; and there is no assistance from any MSS., or from the Septuagint. Shittim was in the land of Moab, and Gilgal was beyond Jordan, in the land of Canaan. *Grotius* and many others repeat the word “Remember,” and supply, “what I have done,” or, “what happened.” This is a sort of omission, which we can hardly think a writer would have made. It is far more probable that a word or words have been somehow left out: and the *Targum*, though generally no safe guide, has so given the passage as to countenance this conjecture. “Were not great things done for you,” is the supplement of the Targum. “And what I did,” seems to be the most natural addition: such words as **ומה עשיתי** appear to have been left out by transcribers. I would then render the verse thus:—

*My people, remember, I pray,
What did Balak, the king of Moab, consult,
And what did Balaam, the son of Beor, answer him,
(And what I did) from Shittim even to Gilgal,
That ye may know the faithful dealings of Jehovah.—Ed.*

ft107 “His justice in destroying the Canaanites, his goodness in giving rest to his people Israel, and his faithfulness to his promises made unto the Fathers.”—*Henry.*

ft108 Literally, “the god of the height,” that is, of heaven, **אלהי מרום**. See ^{<196818>}Psalms 68:18.

ft109 This clause is omitted in my Latin copy; and viewing it as an accidental omission, I have supplied it.—*Ed.*

ft110 The substance of the two lines is given here, not in their literal version. He evidently gives somewhat a different meaning from our translation; and probably the original admits better of the construction adopted here. If **פשע**, a transgression or trespass, be taken for a trespass-

offering, and **הַטָּאָה**, for a sin-offering, as it is often, then the rendering would be this,—

*Shall I make my first-born my trespass-offering,
The fruit of my loins a sin-offering for my soul?*

The verb **נָתַן** is not only to give, to present, to offer, but also to make, to constitute, to appoint. But if the first be rendered transgression, the law of parallelism requires that the second should be rendered sin.—
Ed.

^{ft111} The expression is remarkable—to love mercy, or benevolence, beneficence, or kindness; it is not only to show mercy or kindness, but to love it, so as to take pleasure and delight in it.—*Ed.*

^{ft112} The words are, **וְהִצַּנַּע לִכְתּוֹת עִם-אֱלֹהִים**. The verb **צִנַּע** occurs nowhere else but as a passive participle in ^{<201102>}Proverbs 11:2; but its meaning there is evident, for it is opposed to pride, **זָדוֹן**, which means a swelling pride, such as fills one with high notions of one's self. Then the opposite of this is to be humble from a sense of one's own emptiness. As it is here to the infinitive Hiphil, its literal meaning is what Calvin assigns to it—to humble one's self. And the best rendering of this line would be—"And to humble thyself to walk with God." The Septuagint renders it **ετοιμον εναι**—to be ready; Theodotion, **ασφαλιζου**; Vulgate, *solicitum*. But these seem not to have understood the word. The *Welsh* version is exactly and literally the Hebrew—*Ac ymostwng I rodio gyda 'th Dduw. Gostwng* is to humble, and by adding *ym*, and dropping the *g*, the verb has exactly the meaning of the Hiphil in Hebrew—to humble one's self. They are, indeed, *some* verbs in *Welsh* which admit of all the modifications of the Hebrew verbs, being active, passive, causative, and reflective.—*Ed.*

^{ft113} And so *Newcome* renders it, and there are a few copies in favor of this reading, in which **וְרָאָה** is found: but a fact of this kind is not sufficient to make a change, except there will be other reasons. And then in the next line there is a change made, without the authority of one MS. Indeed these two lines are rendered as though the Archbishop had another text; and indeed it is another: his version is this,—

*And there is a sound wisdom with them that fear his name:
Hear, O ye tribes, him that testifieth.*

This version is partly derived from the Septuagint; which could not have been wholly followed, as it differs so widely from the Hebrew, and hardly presents any meaning. There is far more correspondence in the passage, as it is rendered in our version, and by *Calvin*, and also by *Henderson*; and the Hebrew is closely followed. *Drusius* and others agree with *Calvin*, that תושיה, which is rendered often “sound wisdom,” is to be taken here as concrete, signifying a wise man. מטה is evidently the rod of correction, and is used in this sense in ^{<231005>} Isaiah 10:5, 24; and it is more consistent with the whole passage to consider עדה as a future, construed, as in the present tense, with an affix, from עד, to testify, than from עד to appoint,—”Hear ye the rod,” the chastening rod, “and who testifies of it.” *Newcome* viewed it as being this verb; but he takes no notice of its affix ה, which refers to the rod, by which chastisement is signified.—*Ed.*

^{ft114} One MS. Has היש, which no doubt is the true reading. The Septuagint has μηπιστη, which seems to have no sense whatever. Many copies have האיש, and this is the reading followed by *Junius* and *Tremelius*, and their version is this,—

*Has any one still the house of a dishonest man?
The treasures of dishonesty?
And the small detestable ephah?—Ed.*

^{ft115} Literally it is, “And the ephah of detestable scantiness?” *Marckius* renders the words, “Et ephah tenuitatis abominabilis?” *Henderson*, “And the accursed scanty ephah?”

^{ft116} האזכה. It is not true what *Henderson* says, that the verb זכה is not used transitively. See ^{<197313>} Psalm 73:13; ^{<202009>} Proverbs 20:9. *Jerome* renders the phrase, *numquid approbabo?* Our own version is no doubt correct.—*Ed.*

^{ft117} There is nothing in what goes before for which a reason is given here: hence this אשר cannot be rendered as here proposed. It is an instance of a peculiarity in Hebrew, when a double pronoun is used. Literally it is, “Which the rich men of hers;” the reference is to the city mentioned in verse 9. *Grotius*, *Newcome*, and *Henderson*, render the words thus, “Whose rich men,” etc. The *Welsh* is very nearly the same, which no more than the Hebrew can with propriety be literally rendered in English or in the learned languages,—*Yr hon y mae ei chyvoethogion yn*

llawn trais—The which her rich men are full of violence. But this mode of speaking has a more distinct and fuller reference to what is gone before than the simple relative “whose:” the connection is made more evident.—*Ed.*

ft117 *Newcome* renders this line differently,—

Wherefore I will begin go smite thee.

Following a few MSS. And the Septuagint, he takes the verb here to be **החלתי**, which means, to begin; but the rendering seems flat, and suits not the passage; and it is not true, for the Lord has often smitten them before. The verb is in the past tense, and this has created a difficulty. The verbs in the following verse, which is connected with this, are all in the future tense, referring to a coming judgment. To remove this difficulty I propose the following version,—

***But even I, who have made thee to grieve by striking thee,
Will make thee wholly desolate on account of thy sins:***

Then the threatened desolation is specified. The verb **השמם**, making desolate, is evidently a participle connected with **אני** I, at the beginning of the verse, the rest being an intervening clause: and when a participle follows a nominative case, which often occurs in Hebrew, the auxiliary verb must be supplied in a translation, which in its tense must be regulated by the context, and here by the verse which follows. *Piscator* renders it *Desolabo*, and says, that it is an infinitive put for the future. Grief or sorrow had already been produced, but now entire desolation is threatened.—*Ed.*

ft118 *Newcome*, without the authority of a single MS., but following the Septuagint and *Houbigant*, has changed **שחך** into **השך**, “it shall be dark.” Though the meaning of the passage is not thus materially affected, it is an alteration without sufficient reasons, there being no MS. in its favor, and no necessity arising from the passage itself: indeed, dejection or depression, or casting down, is more suitable to the context, and more emphatical.—*Ed.*

ft119 The verb is **הסנ**, which *Henderson* considers to be in Hephil, the **ו** being left out, which is sometimes the case: with *Drusius* and others, he renders it, “remove,” that is not *goods*, as he says, but wives and children; for if any were for a time removed to a place of safety, they

were afterwards to be given up to the sword. Several copies have **ו** instead of **ס**, which makes it to be the verb **נשג**, and this has the meaning of laying hold or apprehending. But either meaning will suit the context.—*Ed.*

ft120 The verb, **׀שתמר**, is in the singular, and is followed by its nominative case, which is in the plural number. Grammarians are at a loss to account for this, and hence propose several modes of construction. But it is evidently an anomalous idiom, somewhat similar to that in Greek, when plural neuters take a verb in the singular number. As it has been already observed, such a construction as we find here, is very common in the *Welsh* language. The verb is in Hithpael, the reflective mood, the **׀**, as often the case, changing place with the first letter of the verb. It is not always that this mood is reflective, but is sometimes passive, as we find to be the case with **׀סתר**, in ^{<232914>} Isaiah 29:14, and **׀עבר**, in ^{<050326>} Deuteronomy 3:26. And so here it does not retain its reflective meaning. But it may be, that intensity, diligence, or earnestness, is intended to be conveyed; that is, that the statutes of Omri were diligently and carefully observed.—*Ed.*

ft121 There is another view mentioned by *Drusius*,— that is, the *reproach* which God had previously denounced on his people, in case they sinned and continued in their perverseness. Reproach in this sense would mean punishment.—*Ed.*

CHAPTER 7

ft122 *Newcome* renders the verse somewhat different, and makes the comparison more clear,—

*“Woe is me! For I am become
As the gatherers of late figs,
As the gleaners of the vintage:
There is no cluster to eat;
My soul desireth the first ripe fig.”*

Substantially the same is the version of *Dathius* and of *Henderson*. “Late figs” is not strictly the meaning of **׀קייז**, which id properly summer or summer-fruit; yet, as the early or first ripe fig is mentioned in the last line, which forms a contrast with this, what is meant, no

doubt, is the late figs. Then the word for “gleaners,” עללת, is properly, gleanings; but here it is evidently to be taken as a concrete, gleaners, to correspond with gatherers, though *Newcome* considers the women-gleaners to be intended. The four last lines form a parallelism, in which the first and the early fig,—the vintage and the cluster.—*Ed.*

ft123 *Justus*, rendered in the text *humanus*, vel, *mansuetus*. The Hebrew is חסיד, rendered by the Septuagint “ευσβης—godly, pious,”—by *Marckius*, “benignus—kind, benignant,”—by *Newcome*, “the good man,”—and by *Henderson*, “the pious.” It is sometimes rendered holy; but its meaning is, kind, benevolent, merciful, actively good, beneficent. In ^{<191201>} Psalm 12:1, it is rendered “godly,” and in ^{<235701>} Isaiah 57:1, “merciful.”—*Ed.*

ft124 *Rectus*, ישר, rendered by the Septuagint, “κατορθων—one going straight to an object,”—by *Newcome* and *Henderson*, “upright.” It is one who proceeds in a straight course according to the rule of the law, without making any windings or turning aside into any devious path.—*Ed.*

ft125 This clause, though the general sense is allowed by most to be the same, is yet variously rendered. *Drusius* says, “Locus hic diu me multumque torsit.” The original is,—

על הרע כפים להיטיב

The most satisfactory rendering is that which is offered by *Marckius*, which is this,—

*Propter malefaciendum volae pro benefaciendum,—
For doing evil [are their] hands instead of doing good.*

Rabbi *Jonathan*, as quoted by *Marckius*, gives substantially the same rendering, though not literally,—

*Malum faciunt manibus suis, et non bonum faciunt,—
Evil they do with their hands, and they do no good.*

Our version is that of *Junius* and *Tremelius*, and is substantially followed by *Newcome*; and *Henderson*'s version is,—

For evil their hands are well prepared;

which is nearly that of the Septuagint,—

Επι το κακον τας χειρας αυτων ετοιμαζουσι

But the following would be as literal a translation as that of *Marckius*,—

For doing evil are their hands, to do it thoroughly.

The last verb means not only to do good, but also to make a thing good or complete, fully to execute it.—*Ed.*

ft126 The whole verse may be rendered thus,—

***For doing evil are their hands, to execute it fully:
The prince asks, and the judge also, for reward;
When the great man speaks of oppression,
That it is his desire, then they contrive it together,
or, literally, entwine it.***

To render הוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ הוּא, “the wickedness of the soul,” as *Newcome* does, is to leave out wholly the last word; and *Henderson* does the same. *Piscator* gives the form of the words, “aerumnam, quam expetit—the mischief, which he desires.” The two last words literally are, “his desire it is.”—*Ed.*

ft127 It is better, as it is done here, to take the words simply as they are, and not to make superlatives of them: nor is there any change necessary in the second line as proposed by *Dathius*, *Newcome*, and others, by taking the ה from one word and attaching it to another. There is no MS. In its favor, and it is done only on the authority of the Targum. The two lines are these,—

***Their good man is like a brier,
The upright worse than a thorny hedge.***

The preposition כִּי is often rendered “rather than;” but it may, in many places, be rendered “better than,” or “worse than,” according to the import of the passage.—*Ed.*

ft128 See *Ov. Met. Lib. I.* 144-148.

ft129 *Ne fidatis amico*: it is rather, Believe not in a friend, that is, in what he says, אֵל-הַאֲמִינוּ בְרַע. The next expression is that which signifies reliance, trust or confidence. אֱלוֹף, is a leader; ἡγουμενος in Sept., one who leads the way. *Diodati* gives its true meaning,—”A conductor, the most trusty friend, who is one’s usual counselor in every difficulty and perplexity.” *Jerome* refers to scriptural instances as to the persons here mentioned: the *friend*, Ahitophel and Judas,—the *counselor*,

Abimelek, who was made king by the men of Sichem, and oppressed them,—*domestics*, Absalom and the wives of Esau. The word used for “dishonoring” is very strong; מַנְבֵּל, one who counts a thing worthless or abominable; it means not only to dishonor, but to regard with disdain and contempt. “The contempt and violation of the laws of domestic duties,” *Henry* justly observes, “are a sad symptom of an universal corruption of manners. Those are never likely to come to good who are undutiful to their parents, and study to be provoking to them and cross them.”—*Ed.*

ft130 This is not exactly the Hebrew. The verb for rising, as well as that for falling, is in the past tense. The verse, literally rendered, is the following:—

*Rejoice not, my enemy, on my account;
Though I have fallen, I have risen;
Though I shall sit in darkness,
Jehovah will be a light to me.*

There are no copies which give a different reading as to the verb “I have risen.” *Newcome* follows the Septuagint, and thinks that a conversive ׀ is left out. It ought rather perhaps to be considered as the language of faith, realizing the event before it arrived. The fall and “the darkness” refer no doubt to the outward calamities of the Church, its troubles and afflictions.—*Ed.*

ft131 *Iram*, אֶרֶם, which means a stormy anger or displeasure, which agitates and raises tempests, and such were the calamities which came on the Jewish nation.

ft132 “I shall see the equity of his proceedings concerning me, and the performance of his promises to me.”—*Henry.*

ft133 It is somewhat singular that *Newcome* renders the first “fenced” and the second “Egypt:” but *Henderson* renders both “Egypt.” It is not the common name for Egypt, which is מִצְרַיִם; the places referred to, <121924> 2 Kings 19:24, and <231906> Isaiah 19:6, do not justify this application. The word “day” in three instances is here without a preposition: it may therefore be regarded as the nominative absolute, or the verb, is nigh, or approaches, as *Jerome* proposes, is understood. I would give this version of the two verses,—

*11. The day for building thy walls!
That day! Removed far shall be the decree:*

**12. That day! Even to thee shall they come,
 From Assyria and cities of fortress,
 And from the fortress even to the river,
 And from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain,
 or, word for word,
 And from the fortress even to the river and the sea,
 From the sea and the mountain of the mountain.**

The last expression seems to mean, “every mountain.”—*Ed.*

^{ft134} The copulative **ו**, rendered *et, and*, in the text, is not noticed here.

Newcome renders it *For*, connecting this with the former verse, and applying it to heathen lands. But *Dathius* and *Henderson* render it, as an adversative, *But, Nevertheless*, and consider, with Calvin, that the land of Israel is here meant.—*Ed.*

^{ft135} “The crook signifies God’s peculiar care for his people.”—*Grotius*.

^{ft136} “He compares the elect people,” says *Marckius*, “to a flock of sheep, because they resemble them in weakness, in innocency, in meekness, in usefulness, in fruitfulness, and in close union. See ^{<199507>} Psalm 95:7; ^{<234011>} Isaiah 40:11; ^{<263412>} Ezekiel 34:12; ^{<380916>} Zechariah 9:16, 10:3; ^{<431016>} John 10:16, etc.” “They are thy sheep, thy peculiar property, who hear thee, who need thy guidance and feeding, for they are weak and helpless, and liable to go astray without the preserving care of their Shepherd.”—*Cocceius*.

^{ft137} These two lines are better arranged by *Newcome*, and the necessity of a preposition understood is obviated, while the original is more strictly rendered,—

***In the midst of Carmel let them feed,
 In Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.***

It is also better to render “feed” as a prayer than in the future tense, to correspond in tenor with the beginning of the verse. *Henderson* connects “Carmel” with the former line, and thinks that “dwelling alone in the wood” refers to the condition of the Jews when restored, and quotes the prophecy of Balaam in ^{<042309>} Numbers 23:9. But this seems to be a far-fetched exposition; and the word “wood,” which means generally a dreary place, renders it wholly inadmissible. A state of destitution and misery is evidently intended. “They were now,” says *Henry*, “a desolate people; they were in the land of their captivity

as sheep in a forest, in danger of being lost and made a prey to the beasts of the forest.”—*Ed.*

ft138 “The Prophet prayed that God would feed them, and do kind things for them; but God answers, that he will show them marvelous things, will outdo their hopes and expectations.—Their deliverance from Babylon shall be a work of wonder and grace, not inferior to their deliverance out of Egypt, nay, it shall eclipse the luster of that, <241614> Jeremiah 16:14, 15.—God’s former favors to his Church are patterns of future favors, and shall again be copied out as there is occasion.”—*Henry.*

ft139 “They shall be ashamed of the strength in which they trusted,”—*Drusius*; or as *Grotius* says, “of all their strength which had been so suddenly destroyed;” or, as another author says, “of all their strength when found ineffectual for the purpose of destroying the people of God.”—*Ed.*

ft140 “Malice,” says *Jerome*, “not only blinds the eyes, but also deafens the ears.”—*Ed.*

ft141 *Dathius* renders these two lines differently, “Jovam Deum nostrum timebunt eumque reverebuntur—Jehovah our God they shall fear, and him will they reverence.” But this is neither consistent with the passage, nor with the form in which the words appear. פחד is not commonly, if ever, a transitive verb, and to dread, or to be afraid, and not to fear, is its usual meaning: and ירא, when it means the fear of reverence, is generally construed without a preposition, and with ירא before Jehovah. The literal rendering is no doubt that which is given by Calvin. The distich is capable of being rendered in *Welsh* exactly as in Hebrew, in the same form and with the same prepositions; and, when thus rendered, the meaning is what is give here,—

*Oherwydd Jehova ein Duw ur arswydant,—
Ac ovnant rhagddot.*

To fear because of thee, and to fear thee, are two distinct things. You will have the first form in <061008> Joshua 10:8; 11:6; and the second in <053112> Deuteronomy 31:12. The first refers to the fear of the Canaanites, the dread of their power; the second, to the fear of Jehovah.—*Ed.*

ft142 *Cocceius* calls this verse the *doxology* of the Church. *Jerome* renders the first words,—*Quis Deus similis tui?* Which is literally the original, כְּמוֹד מִי-אֵל—What God like thee? That is, *Jehovah*, mentioned in the preceding verse. Τίς Θεός ὡσπερ συ; *Sept.* Thinking that the verse will admit of somewhat different arrangement, and of a more literal rendering, I give the following,—

*What God is like thee?
Taking away iniquity, and passing over transgression!—
Against the remnant of his heritage,
He retaineth not for ever his anger,
For a lover of mercy is He.*

There is a transition after the second line from the second to the third person; hence I make here the division. Besides, the construction of the third with the second has ever been found awkward by all the critics; but its construction with the fourth verse is perfectly natural. נִשָּׂא “taking away,” or removing, conveys the idea of a burden being lifted up and removed. “Passing over” seems to allude to the angel passing over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. “Iniquity,” עוֹן, is guilt and inward depravity; and “Transgression,” פֶּשַׁע, is an overt act of sin, an outward violation of the law. “A lover,” חֶפְצֵן; the Septuagint renders it, θελητης ελεους—the wisher of mercy; which is too weak, for the word means delight. It may be rendered, “For one who delights in mercy is He.” The *Targum* reads, *Amat enim benefacere*—for he loves to do good.—*Ed.*

ft143 *Grotius*, *Dathius*, and *Henderson*, consider that this verb, placed before another, without a conjunction, expresses only a reiteration; and they render it adverbially, “again.” But, in this place, it would be better to give it its proper meaning; for as God is said to depart from his people, <280912> Hosea 9:12, so he may be said also to return. The Septuagint renders it επιστρεψει—He will return. *Drusius* reads, *convertetur*, scil. Ab ira sua—*He will turn*, that is, from his anger. *Newcome’s* version is, “He will turn again.”—*Ed.*

ft144 There is a mistake as to this verb; it is the *second* person, as are all the verbs which follow. The Prophet resumes here his address to God, which he commenced in the two first lines of the last verse. To show the difference between what he speaks *to* and what he speaks *of* God, the whole passage shall be here given,—

*18. What God is like thee!
Taking away iniquity, and passing over transgression!
Against the remnant of his heritage
He retains not forever his anger;
For a lover of mercy is He;*

*19. He will return, he will pity us,
He will subdue our iniquities:—
Yea, thou wilt cast into the depths of the sea all their sins;
Thou wilt show faithfulness to Jacob, mercy to Abraham,
Which thou swarest to our fathers in the days of old.*

“Pity,” רַחֲמִים, is tender compassion; the noun in the plural number is used to designate the bowels. “Subdue,” or trample under foot, is rendered “cover” by *Newcome*, on the ground of this being the meaning of כָּבַשׁ in Chaldee. This wholly destroys the striking character of the passage. Our sins are here represented as our enemies; God subdues them; and then in the next line the simile is continued, they are to be drowned like Pharaoh and his hosts in the depths of the sea.

Henderson's remarks on this point are very excellent. “There is no ground,” he says, “for rejecting the radical idea of *trampling under foot as enemies*. Sin must ever be regarded as hostile to man. It is not only contrary to his interests, but it powerfully opposes and combats the moral principles of his nature, and the higher principles implanted by grace; and but for the counteracting energy of divine influence, must prove victorious. Without the subjugation of evil propensities, pardon would not be a blessing.”—*Ed.*