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COMMENTARY

**COMMENTARY
ON THE PROPHET
OBADIAH**

by John Calvin

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CALVIN'S PREFACE

TO

OBADIAH

THIS PROPHECY does not consist of many oracles, nor of many sermons, as other prophecies; but it only denounces on the Idumeans a near destruction, and then promises a restoration to the chosen people of God. But it threatens the Idumeans for the sake of administering consolation to the chosen people; for it was a grievous and hard trial for the children of Jacob, an elect people, to see the posterity of Esau, who had been rejected by God, flourishing both in wealth and power.

As then the children of Israel were miserable in comparison with their own kindred, the adoption of God might have appeared worthless; and this was in great measure the reason why the Israelites preferred the lot of other is observed by us, our sorrow is enhanced and our weariness is increased. When therefore the Israelites saw the Idumeans living at ease and beyond the reach of danger, and when they also saw them in the enjoyment of every abundance, while they themselves were exposed as a prey to their enemies, and were continually expecting new calamities, it could not have been, but that their faith must have utterly failed, or at least become much weakened. For this reason the Prophet here shows, that though the Idumeans now lived happily, yet in a short time they would be destroyed, for they were hated by God; and he shows that this would be the case, as we shall see from the contents of this Book, for the sake of the chosen people.

We now then perceive the design of the Prophet: as adversity might have weakened the Israelites, and even utterly broken them down, the Prophet here applies comfort and props up their dejected minds, for the Lord would shortly look on them and take due vengeance on their enemies.

And the reason why this prophecy is levelled against the Idumeans only is this, — that they, as we know, raged more cruelly than any others against the Israelites: for it is not said without a cause in ^{<19D707>}Psalm 137:7,

‘Remember the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem, who said,
Make bare, make bare even to the very foundations.’

Now at what time OBADIAH prophesied, it does not appear ^{f1a} except that it is probable that this prophecy was announced, when the Idumeans rose up against the Israelites and distressed them by many annoyances: for they seem to be mistaken who think that OBADIAH lived before the time of Isaiah. It appears that Jeremiah (<244901> Jeremiah 49:1) and this Prophet made use of the same thoughts and nearly of the same words, as we shall hereafter see. The Holy Spirit could, no doubt, have expressed the same things in different words; but he was pleased to join together these two testimonies, that they might obtain more credit. ^{f2a} I know not whether Obadiah and Jeremiah were contemporaries, and on this subject we need not bestow much labor. It is sufficient for us to know, that this prophecy was added to other prophecies, that the Israelites might feel assured, that though their kindred the Idumeans might prosper for a time, yet they could not escape the hand of God, but would shortly be constrained to give an account of their cruelty, inasmuch as they had without cause been all in a flame against the distressed and afflicted people of God.

Now our Prophet shows at the end that God would become the avenger of this cruelty, which the Idumeans had exercised; for though he chastised his own people, he did not yet forget his gratuitous covenant. Let us now come to the words.

COMMENTARIES ON

THE PROPHET OBADIAH

<310101> OBADIAH 1

1. The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom ^{F3}; We have heard a rumor from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle.

1. Visio Obadae. Sic Dominus Jehova contra Edom, Rumorem audivimus a Jehova, et legatus ad gentes missus est, Surgite et surgamus contra eam ad proelium.

OBADIAH'S preface is, that he brought nothing human, but only declared the vision presented to him from above. We indeed know that it was God alone that was ever to be heard in the Church, as even now he demands to be heard: but yet he sent his prophets, as afterwards the apostles; yea, as he sent his only begotten Son, whom he has set over us to be our only and sovereign Teacher. Obadiah then by saying that it was a vision, said the same, as though he declared, that he did not presumptuously bring forward his own dreams, or what he conjectured, or discovered by human reason, but that he adduced only a celestial oracle: for ךזזך, *chezun*, as we have observed in other places, was a vision, by which God revealed himself to his Prophets.

He then adds, *Thus saith Jehovah*. Here is a fuller expression of the same declaration. We thus see that the Prophet, in order that the doctrine he brought forward might not be suspected, made God the author; for what faith can be put in men, whom we know to be vain and false, except as far as they are ruled by the Spirit of God and sent by Him? Seeing then that the Prophet so carefully teaches us, that what he declared was delivered to him by God, we may hence learn what I have lately referred to, — that the Prophets formerly so spoke, that God alone might be heard among the people.

He says afterwards, *A rumor have we heard*. Some render it, a word, or a doctrine. שמועה, *shimuoē*, is properly a hearing, and is derived from the verb the Prophet subjoins. A hearing then have we heard; so it is translated literally. But some think that what was taught is pointed out, as though he said, “The Lord has revealed this to me and to other Prophets;” according to what Isaiah says, ^{<235301>}Isaiah 53:1, ‘Who has believed our hearing?’ It is the same word, and he speaks of God’s word or doctrine. But it is probable that he refers here to those tumultuous rumors, which commonly precede wars and calamities. *We have then heard a rumor*. The verb in Jeremiah is not in the plural number, שמענו *shimonu*, but שמועה שמעתו *shimoti shimunoe*, ‘I have heard,’ says Jeremiah, ‘a hearing.’ But our Prophet uses the plural number, ‘We have heard a hearing.’ The sense however is the same; for Jeremiah says that he had heard rumors; and the Prophet here adds others to himself, as though he said, “This rumor is spread abroad, but it is from the Lord: it is certain that this rumor has been heard even by the profane and the despisers of God.” But the Prophet shows that wars are not stirred up at random, but by the secret influence of God; as though he said, “When a tumult arises, let us not think that its beginning is from the earth, but God himself is the mover.” We now then apprehend the design of the Prophet: though he speaks of the rumor of wars, he yet shows that chance or accident does not rule in such commotions, but the hidden influence of God.

We have heard, he says *from Jehovah, and a messenger, or, an ambassador, to the nations has been sent*^{F4}, *Arise ye, and we will arise against her to battle*. In Jeremiah, it is, ‘Assemble ye, come and arise against her to battle.’ The Prophet here shows, I have no doubt, whence the rumor came, which he had just mentioned; for they were now indeed stirring up one another to destroy that land. If any one had formed a judgment according to human wisdom, he would have said that the Assyrians were the cause why war was brought on the Idumeans, because they had found them either inconstant or even perfidious, or because they had feigned a pretense when there was no just reason for making war. But the Prophet here raises his mind upwards and acknowledges God to be the mover of this war, because he intended to punish the cruelty of that people, which they had exercised toward their own kindred, the Israelites; and at the same time he encourages others also, that they might understand that it was altogether directed by the hidden counsel of God, that the

Assyrians, from being friends, became of a sudden enemies, that a war was all in a flame against the Idumeans at a time when they were at ease, without any fear, without any apprehension of danger. It follows —

<310102> OBADIAH 2-4	
2 Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised.	2 Ecce parvum posui te inter gentes, contemptus tu valde.
3 The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?	3 Superbia cordis tui decepit te, qui habitas in scissuras petrae (vel, rupis;) excelsa habitatio ejus, dicens in corde suo, Quis detrahet me in terram?
4 Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.	4 Si exaltaveris quasi aquila, etsi inter nubes posueris nidum suum, inde ego detraham te, dicit Jehova.

Jeremiah uses nearly the same words; but the sense of the expression is ambiguous, when he says, ‘Lo, little have I set thee.’ To me it appears probable, that the Prophet reproves the Idumeans, because they became arrogant, as it were, against the will of God, and in opposition to it, when, at the same time, they were confined to the narrow passes of mountains. It is said elsewhere, (<390102> Malachi 1:2,) ‘Jacob and Esau, were they not brethren?’ “But I have given to you the inheritance promised to your father Abraham; I have transferred the Idumeans to mount Seir.” Now it is less bearable, if any one be elated with pride, when his condition is not so honorable. I therefore think that the Idumeans are here condemned because they vaunted so much, and arrogated to themselves more than what was right, when they yet were contemptible, when their condition was mean and obscure, for they dwelt on mount Seir. But others think that the punishment, which was impending over them, is here denounced, *Lo, little have I made thee among the nations*, and Jeremiah says, ‘*and contemptible among men*’; he omits the two words, thou and exceedingly; he says only, ‘*and contemptible among men*’. But as to the substance, there is hardly any difference. If then we understand that that nation was proud without

reason, the sense is evident, that is, that they, like the giants, carried on war against God, that they vaunted themselves, though confined to the narrow passes of mountains. Though I leave to others their own free opinion, I am yet inclined to the former view, while the latter has been adopted nearly by the consent of all; and that is, that God was resolved forcibly to constrain to order those ferocious men, who, for no reason, and even in opposition to nature, are become insolent. But if a different interpretation be more approved, we may say, that the Prophet begins with a threatening, and then subjoins a reason why God determined to diminish and even to destroy them: for though they dwelt on mountains, it was yet a fertile region; and further, they had gathered in course of long time much wealth, when they attained security, when no enemy disturbed them. This then is the reasoning, *Lo, I have made thee small and contemptible in the mountain*, — and why? *because the pride of thy heart has deceived thee*; and Jeremiah adds, terror^{F5}, although some render תפלצת *taphlatastae*, image; but this seems not appropriate. Jeremiah then, I doubt not, mentions terror in the first place; for it almost ever happens, that the proud strike others with fear: such then were the Idumeans.

Now if we follow the first meaning I explained, the two verses may be read as connected, *Lo, I have made thee small and contemptible among the nations*; ^{F6} but *the pride of thy heart has deceived thee*; some render it, has raised thee up, deriving it from נשא *nusha*: but they read ש *shin*, pointed on the left side; for if נשא *nusha* has the point in the branch of the shin, on the right hand, it means to deceive, but if on the left, it signifies to raise up. Then they give this translations “The pride of thine heart has raised thee up:” but we clearly learn from Jeremiah, that it ought, as almost all interpreters agree, to be rendered thus, “The pride of thine heart has deceived thee:” for he says not השׂא *eshiac* but השׂא אׁוּתָךְ *eshia autea*, that is, it was to thee the cause of error and of madness. Of the sense then of this verb there can be no doubt.

The Prophet now laughs to scorn the Idumeans, because they relied on their own fortresses, and thought themselves, according to the common saying, to be beyond the reach of darts; and hence they petulantly insulted the Israelites and despised God himself. The Prophet therefore says, that the Idumeans in vain felicitated themselves, for he shows that all they

promised to themselves were mere delusions. The import of what is said then is, “Whence is this your security, that ye think that enemies can do you no harm? Yea, ye despise God as well as men; whence is this haughtiness? whence also is the great confidence with which ye are puffed up? Verily, it comes only from mere delusions. *The pride of thine heart has deceived thee.*”

And yet there was not wanting a reason why the Idumeans were thus insolent, as the Prophet also states: but he at the same time shows that they had deceived themselves; for God cared not for their fortresses; nay, he counted them as nothing. Thou *dwest*, he says, (this is to be regarded as a concession,) *in the clefts of the stone*; some read, “between the windings of the rock;” ^{F7} though others think סלע *Salo* to be the name of a city. But though I should allow that the Prophet alludes to the name of a city, I yet do not see how can that stand which they hold; for clefts comfort not with a city situated on a plain, though within the ranges of mountains. I do not then doubt but that סלע *Salo* here means mount Seir. As then the Idumeans had fortresses amidst rocks, they thought that all enemies could easily be kept out.

And hence it follows, *The height is his habitation, that is, he dwells in lofty places; and hence he says in his heart, Who shall draw me down to the ground?* He afterwards subjoins what I have already stated, — that though their region was exceedingly well fortified, yet the Idumeans were greatly deceived, and indulged themselves in vain delusions, “If thou shouldst raise up thy seat, he says, *like the eagle*”, — literally, ‘If thou shouldst rise as the eagle,’ — “*and if thou shouldst among the clouds*” ^{F8} set and nest, I will thence draw thee down, saith Jehovah”. We now see that the Prophet did not without reason deride the confidence with which the Idumeans were inflated, by setting up their fortresses in opposition to God: for it is the greatest madness for men to rely on their own power and to despise God himself. At the same time he could, as it were, easily dissipate by one blast every idea of defense or of power that is in us; but this subject will be more fully handled by us tomorrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou seest us to be on every side at this day beset by so many enemies, even by those who constantly

devise means to destroy us, while we are so very weak and feeble, — o grant, that we may learn to look up to thee, and that our trust may so recumb on thee, that however exposed we may be to all kinds of danger according to what appears to the flesh, we may not yet doubt but that thou art ever armed with sufficient power to terrify our enemies, so that we may quietly live even amidst all dangers, and never cease to call on thy name, as thou hast promised to be the sure and faithful defender of our safety in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE SEVENTIETH

We observed in our yesterday's Lecture, that it nothing avails the ungodly, when they set up their fortresses against the judgment of God, as though they could escape safe from his hand; for as God has heaven and earth under his control, he can, whenever it pleases him, draw down all who now despise his power, and, therefore, deride his Prophets, or regard as nothing their threatening. This passage then ought to be carefully noticed; for God declares that it is in his power to draw down from the very clouds those who so raise themselves up, as to think themselves to be elevated above all dangers. The Prophet now says —

<310105> OBADIAH 5

5. If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes?

5. An fures venerunt ad te? An praedones nocturni? Quomodo in silentium redactus es? (vel, quomodo consumptus es?) annon furati essent sufficientiam suam? An vindemiares ad te venerunt? Annon reliquissent racemos?

The Prophet shows in this verse that the calamity with which God was resolved to afflict the Idumeans would not be slight, for nothing would be left among them; and he amplifies what he says by a comparison. When one is plundered of his property by thieves, he grieves, that what he had acquired by much labor through life, has been in one moment taken from him: and when any one has spent labor and expense in cultivating his vineyard, and another takes away its fruit, he complains of his great misfortune, that he had lost his property and big labor in the cultivation of his vineyard, while another devours its fruit. But the Prophet intimates that God would not be content with such kind of punishment as to the Idumeans.

Hence he says, *Have night thieves or robbers come to thee?* They must doubtless have stolen, and have taken away what they thought sufficient for them; but now nothing shall be left to thee. In short, the Prophet

intimates that the Assyrians would not be like thieves or night robbers, who stealthily and privately take away what comes to their hands; but he means, that the Idumeans would be so plundered, that their houses would be left wholly empty, and he declares that the Assyrians would thus spoil them like night thieves or robbers, who are wont to proceed with unbridled liberty; for none dares to resist them, or even to say a word against them. This plundering then will not be, says the Prophet, of an ordinary kind; but the enemies will make thee entirely empty.

The same is the object in view when he says, *Have vintagers come to thee?* To be sure, they commonly leave some clusters; but the Assyrians will leave, no, not one: they shall depart so laden with plunders, that thou shalt be left empty.

But all this, as we have reminded you, was said in order to alleviate or to mitigate the grief of the faithful, who then deemed themselves very miserable, as they were alone plundered by enemies; for they saw that their neighbors were dwelling in safety, and even becoming partakers of the spoil. Their condition therefore was very miserable and degraded. Hence the Prophet, that he might moderate this bitter grief, says, that the Idumeans would in no common way be plundered, for not a hair could be left them. This is the import of the passage.

But some regard the verb נדמיתה *nudamite* as signifying, “Thou art reduced to silence;” for the verb דום *dum* or דמה *dame* means to be silent: and they give this exposition, “How dost thou not endeavor at least to meet thine enemies?” for they take “to be silent” in the sense of being still, as דמה *dame* is often so taken in Scripture, “How then have they been silent?” but he speaks of the future in the past tense, as though God had already inflicted punishment on the Idumeans, that faith in the prediction might be made more certain: thou hast been reduced to silence, that is, how couldest thou remain quiet on seeing thine enemies plundering with so much violence — how then hast thou been reduced to silence? Others say, How hast thou been consumed? for דמה *dame* often means to destroy. But to this point belongs no great importance; for the Prophet means, that it could not be ascribed to chance, that enemies would destroy the whole land of Edom, for the cruel assault would by no means be of an ordinary kind: and then as the Idumeans thought that an entrance to their enemies was on every side closed up, as they inhabited the summits of

mountains, according to what I have already said, and that they were most safe in their recesses and lofty rocks, the Prophet here sets it forth as a wonderful thing that God's judgment would yet reach them. Let us proceed —

<310106> **OBADIAH 6**

6. How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!

6. Quomodo quaesita sunt Esau, perversigata abscondita ejus?

He confirms the former sentence, — that the Idumeans in vain trusted that their riches would be safe, because they had hidden and deep recesses. Even when a country is plundered by enemies, the conquerors dare not to come to places of danger; when there are narrow passes, they avoid them, for they think that there is there some evil design. Hence conquerors, fearing hidden places, plunder only those which are open, and always consider well whether their advance is safe: but Idumea, as we have said, had hidden recesses, for its rocks were almost inaccessible, and there were many conveniences there for hiding and concealing its riches. But the Prophet says, that all this would be useless: and that he might more effectually rouse them, he speaks with astonishment, as of something incredible. *How have been sought* the things of *Esau*, and thoroughly searched his hidden places! Who could have thought this? for they might have concealed their treasures in rocks and caverns, and thence repelled their enemies. But in vain would be all their attempts: how could this possibly be? Here then he awakens the minds of men, that they might acknowledge the judgment of God; and at the same time he laughs to scorn the vain confidence with which the Idumeans were inflated; and besides, he strengthens the minds of the godly, that they might not doubt but that God would perform what he declares, for he can indeed penetrate even to the lowest deep.

In short, the Prophet intimates that the faithful did not act wisely, if they measured God's vengeance, which was impending on the Idumeans, by their own understanding or by what usually happens; for the Lord would make a thorough search, so that no hiding — places would escape his sight; and then all their treasures would be exposed as a prey to their enemies.

We hence learn, that as men in vain seek hiding places for themselves that they may be safe from dangers; so in vain they conceal their riches; for the hand of God can penetrate beyond the sea, land, heaven, and the lowest deep. Nothing then remains for us but ever to offer ourselves and all our things to God. If he protects us under his wings, we shall be safe in the midst of innumerable dangers; but if we think that subterfuges will be of any avail to us, we deceive ourselves. The Prophet now adds —

<310107> OBADIAH 7-8	
<p>7. All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him.</p>	<p>7. Usque ad terminum expulerunt te omnes viri foederis tui; deceperunt te, praevaluerunt tibi, viri pacifici tui (viri pacis tuae;) viri panis tui posuerunt vulnus sub te: nulla est intelligentia in eo.</p>
<p>8. Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?</p>	<p>8. Annon in die illa, dicit Jehova, perdam sapientes ex Edom? Et intelligentiam e monte Esau? (hoc est, e monte Seir.)</p>

Here the Prophet expresses the manner in which God would punish the Idumeans: trusting in their confederacies, they despised God, as we have already had to observe. The Prophet now shows that it is in the power of God to change the minds of men, so that they who were their friends being suddenly inflamed with rage, would go forth to destroy the Idumeans. Seeing then that they regarded the Assyrians not only as a shield to them, but also as a defense against God himself, the Prophet here declares that when it would be God's purpose to punish them, there would be no need to send to a distance for agents or instruments to execute his vengeance; for he would arm the Assyrians themselves and the Chaldeans, inasmuch as he could turn the hearts of men as he pleased. We now see the Prophet's meaning; for he here takes away and shakes off the vain confidence of the Idumeans, that they might not harden themselves for being fortified by confederacies and for having powerful friends, for the Lord would turn friends into enemies. *To thy border*, he says, *have they driven thee.* שְׁלַח *shilach* is properly to send forth or to throw away; some render it, they

have followed; as though the Prophet here spoke of the neighboring nations, and according to their view the meaning is, “However much thy neighbors may love thee, yet nothing will they show of this love, except that they will follow thee with feigned tears, when thine enemies shall lead thee away captive.” But this is a strained exposition, and corresponds not with the context. The Prophet then describes here, I doubt not, the change, such as would take place, that the Idumeans might know, that they trusted in vain in their power and defenses. *The men of thy covenant*, he says, *have driven thee away*; as though he said, “See what thou gainest in anxiously seeking the friendship of those who will yet be thy enemies; hadst thou remained quiet in thy clefts, it would have been much better for thee: but now thou runnest to Assyria and Chaldea, and this will be the cause of thy ruin. Hence the men of thy covenant shall banish thee to the border: but if thou hadst had no friendship nor commerce with them, thou mightest have lived safely in thy recesses, no one would have driven thee out: just, then, has been the reward of thy ambition, for having thus resorted to the Assyrians and Chaldeans.”

Continuing the same subject, the Prophet says, *Deceived thee have the men of thy peace* — friends and confederates; for the Hebrews call those men of peace, who are connected together by any kind of alliance. *The men* then of *thy peace*, that is those whom thou thoughtest thou mightest trust, and on whom thou midst rely; — these have deceived thee, even these have prevailed against thee, and oppressed thee through craft and treachery. *The men of thy bread have placed under thee a wound*: the men of bread were those who were guests or friends. Some give this rendering, “Who eat thy bread;” and it is an admissible interpretation, for the Assyrians and Chaldeans, as they were insatiable, had taken booty from the Idumeans; for whosoever then hunted for their friendship, must have brought them some gifts. Since then they thus sold their friendship, the Prophet rightly calls them the men of bread with regard to those whose substance and wealth they devoured. If then we take the men of bread in this sense, there is a probability in the meaning. But we may give another interpretation, as though he had said that they were guests and friends: these then *have fixed under thee a wound*, that is, they have been thy destruction, and that through guile and hidden artifices. When one attacks another openly, he who is attacked can avoid the stroke; but the Prophet says, that the Assyrians and Chaldeans would be perfidious to the

Idumeans, so as to conquer them through treachery. Fix then *shall they a wound under thee*, as when one hides a dagger between the bed and the sheet, when a person intends to go to sleep. So also he says that a wound is placed underneath, when a feigned friend hides himself, that he may more easily hurt him whom he assails deceitfully and craftily.

He at length thus concludes, *There is no intelligence in him*. Here the Prophet no doubt derides in an indirect way the foolish confidence with which the Idumeans were blinded; for they thought themselves to be in a superlative degree wary, so that they had no reason to fear, as they could see afar off, and arrange their concerns with the utmost prudence. Since then they thought that they excelled in wisdom, and could not be surprised by any craft, the Prophet says here, that there would be in them no understanding.

But he immediately subjoins the reason, “Shall I not in that day, saith Jehovah, destroy, or extinguish, the wise from Edom?” While the Idumeans were prosperous, because they acted wisely, it was incredible that they could thus in a moment be overthrown: but the Prophet says, that even this was in the hand and power of God; “Can I not,” he says, “put an end to whatever there is of wisdom in the Idumeans? Cannot I destroy all their prudent men? This will I do.” We now then perceive the import of the words.

But this place deserves notice: the Prophet upbraids the Idumeans, and says, that their confederates and friends would prove their ruin, because they had conspired among themselves beyond what was just and right. When men thus mutually join together, there are none of them who do not greedily seek their own advantage; in the meantime, both sides are deceived; for God disconcerts their counsels, and blasts the issue, because they regard not the right end. And when the wicked seek friendships, they ever blend something that is wrong; they either try to injure the innocent, or they seek some advantage. All the compacts then which the ungodly and the despisers of God make with one another, have always something vicious intermixed; it is therefore no wonder that the Lord disappoints them of their hope, and curses their counsels. This is then the reason why the Prophet declares to the Idumeans, that those, whom they thought to be their best and most faithful friends, would be their ruin.

But here it may be objected and said, that the same thing happens to the children of God. For David, though he acted towards all with the utmost faithfulness and the greatest sincerity, yet complains, that the man of his peace and a friend had contrived against him many frauds,

‘Raised up his heel against me,’ he says, ‘has the man of my peace; eat bread together did I with him, and he with me,’
(^{<194109>} Psalm 41:9)

It was necessary also that this should have been the case with Christ himself. Now, if the children of God must be conformed to the image of Christ, what the Prophet says is no more than what applies to the whole Church, and to every member of it. This may appear strange at the first view; but a solution may be easily given: for while we strive to maintain peace with all men, though they may perfidiously, through treachery, oppress us, yet the Lord himself will succor us; and in the meantime, however hard may this trial be, we yet know that our patience is tried by God, that he may at last deliver us, so that we may confidently flee to him and testify our sincerity. But while the ungodly mutually cheat one another, while with wicked and sideway artifices they oppress and circumvent each other, while they cast forth their hidden virulence, while they turn peace into war, they know that their recompense is just and merited: they cannot flee to God, for their conscience restrains them. They indeed understand that they have deserved what the Lord has justly repaid them. It is then no wonder that the conspiracy in which the Idumeans trusted, when they made the Chaldeans their friends, should have been accursed; for the Lord turned to their ruin whatever they thought useful to themselves.

This then is the import of the whole, — that if we wish not to be deceived, we must not attempt anything without an upright heart. Provided then we exceed not the limits of our calling, let us cultivate peace with all men, let us endeavor to do good to all men, that the Lord may bless us; but if it be his purpose to try our patience, he will be still present with us, though false friends try us by their treacheries, though we be led into danger by their malice, and be for a time trodden under their feet; if, on the contrary, we act with bad faith, and think that we have fortunate alliances, which have been obtained by wicked and nefarious artifices, the Lord will turn for our destruction whatever we think to be for our safety.

We must now notice what the Prophet says, *Shall I not in that day destroy the wise from Edom?* Though men be in many respects blind, whom God guides not by his Spirit, and on whom he shines not with his word, yet the worst blindness is, when men become inebriated with the false conceit of wisdom. When therefore any one thinks himself endued with understanding, so that he can perceive whatever is needful, and that he cannot be circumvented, his wisdom is insanity and extreme madness: it would indeed be better for us to be idiots and fools than to be thus inebriated. Since then the wise of this world are insane, the Lord declares that they will have no wisdom when the time of trial comes. God indeed permits the ungodly for a long time to felicitate themselves on account of their own acumen and counsels, as he suffered the Idumeans to go on prosperously. And there are also many at this day who felicitate themselves on their successes, and almost adore their own cunning. Who indeed can persuade the Venetians that there is anywhere consummate wisdom but among themselves, by which, forsooth, they surpass all others in deception? For no other reason do they, amidst many agitations, retain their own position, except that they seem to see farther into what is for their own advantages; nay, that kings in general stand, and continue safe amidst so many shakings, this they ascribe to their own wisdom: "Except I had looked well in this respect to my own affairs, except I had anticipated danger, and except I had foreseen it, it would have been all over as to my condition." Thus they think within themselves: but the Lord at length infatuates them, that it may be evident, that this was not formerly said in vain to the Idumeans, *Shall I not in that day, saith Jehovah, etc.* and it was emphatically added, *in that day*: for the Prophet means, that it was no wonder that the Idumeans had been hitherto wary and adopted the best counsel; for it was not the Lord's purpose to deprive them of wisdom; but when the suitable time of vengeance came, he instantly took away whatever prudence there was in them; for it is indeed in God's hand to take away whatever there is either of understanding or of acuteness in men.

But we are warned by these words, that if we excel in understanding, we are not to abuse this singular gift of God, as we see the case to be with the ungodly, who turn to cunning whatever wisdom the Lord has bestowed on them. There is hardly one in a hundred to be found, who does not seek to be crafty and deceitful, if he excels in understanding. This is a very wretched thing. What a great treasure is wisdom? Yet we see that the

world perverts this excellent gift of God; the more reason there is for us to labor, that our wisdom should be founded in true simplicity. This is one thing. Then we must also beware of trusting in our own understanding, and of despising our enemies, and of thinking that we can ward off any evil that may impend over us; but let us ever seek from the Lord, that we may be favored at all times with the spirit of wisdom, that it may guide us to the end of life: for he can at any moment take from us whatever he has given us, and thus expose us to shame and reproach.

When he says, *from mount Esau*, he means mount Seir, as I have already reminded you. But he meant to point out their whole country; for they were almost surrounded by mountains, and dwelt, as it is well known, in that Arabia which is called Patraea. It follows —

<310109> OBADIAH ⁹	
<p>9 And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.</p>	<p>9 Et deficient (vel, frangentur) fortes tui, Theman, ut excidatur vir e monte Esau prae occisione (vel, quia excidetur; לִמְעַן enim postest duobis modis exponi.)</p>

The Prophet, after having spoken of one kind of God’s vengeance, adds another, — that he would break whatever there was of strength in Idumea: and thus he shows that the courage and strength of men, no less than their understanding, are in the hand of God. As then God dissipates and destroys, whenever it pleases him, whatever wisdom there may be in men, so also he enervates and breaks down their hearts: in a word, he deprives them of all strength, so that they fail and come to nothing of themselves. Were they who are proud of their strength and counsels rightly to consider this, they would at length learn to submit themselves in true humility to God. But this truth is what the world cannot be made to believe: yet God shows to us here, as in a picture, that however men may flourish for a time, they would immediately vanish, were not he to sustain them, and to support his gifts in them, and keep them entire; and, especially, that empty smoke is everything, that seems to be understanding and strength in men; for the Lord can easily take away both, whensoever it may please him.

We ought therefore carefully to observe what he says here, *Broken down shall be thy brave men, O Teman*. Some think that a particular country is here pointed out; for Teman is the south, that is, with regard to Judea. But as Teman, we know, was one of the grandsons of Esau, (⁰¹³⁶¹⁵ Genesis 36:15,) and as a part of Arabia was called by this name, it is the more probable, that the Prophet turns here his discourse to Idumea. But as to the word Teman, it is, a part taken for the whole.

For cut off, he says, *shall be man*: by saying, *cut off shall man*, he means, that all to a man would be destroyed. How? “by slaughter” ^{F9}. But קתל *kothel* means a slaughter in which no one remains alive. We hence see what the Prophet means, — that all the Idumeans would be so broken down, that all would fall, for there would be no heart nor strength to resist. It now follows —

³¹⁰¹¹⁰ OBADIAH 10-11	
<p>10. For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.</p>	<p>10. Propter oppressionem fratris tui Jacob, operiet te opprobrium, et excideris in perpetuum.</p>
<p>11. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them.</p>	<p>11. Die quo stabas ex opposito, die quo alieni auferebant substantiam ejus, et extranei ingressi sunt portas ejus, et super Jerusalem miserunt sortem, etiam tu quasi unus ex illis.</p>

The Prophet here sets forth the reason why God would deal so severely and dreadfully with the Idumeans. Had he simply prophesied of their destruction, it would have been an important matter; for the Jews might have thereby known that their ruin was not chance, but the scourge of God; they might have known that they themselves were with others chastised by God, and this would have been a useful instruction to them: but what brought them the chief consolation was to hear, that they were so dear to God that he would undertake the defense of their wrongs and avenge them, that he would have a regard for their safety. Hence, when they heard that God, because he loved them, would punish the Idumeans,

it was doubtless an invaluable comfort to them in their calamities. To this subject the Prophet now comes.

For the unjust oppression of thy brother Jacob, etc. The word חָמַס *chemes*, violence, is to be taken passively; as though he said, “See, how thou hast acted towards thy brother Jacob.” And he calls him his brother, not for honor’s sake, but, on the contrary, for the purpose of showing forth more fully the cruelty of the Idumeans; for consanguinity had had no effect in preventing them from raging against their own brethren, and as it were against their own bowels. It was therefore a proof of barbarous inhumanity, that the Idumeans, forgetting their common nature, had been so inflamed with hatred against their own brethren: for, as it is well known, they had descended from the same common father, Abraham, and also from Isaac, and had the symbol of circumcision. The Idumeans indeed professed that they were the descendants of Abraham, and were God’s peculiar people. Since then God had made his covenant with their common father Isaac, and since they had equally retained circumcision, which was the seal of that covenant, how did it happen, that the Idumeans conducted themselves so cruelly towards their brethren? We hence see, that the name of brother in this clause — *for the oppression of thy brother Jacob*, is mentioned for the purpose of enhancing their crime.

As then, he says, thou hast been so violent against thy brother, *cover thee shall reproach, and forever shalt thou be cut off*. He intimates that the calamity would not be only for a time as in the case of Israel, but that the Lord would execute such a punishment as would prove that the Idumeans were aliens to him; for God in chastising his Church ever observes certain limits, as he never forgets his covenant. He proves indeed that the Idumeans were not his people, however much they might falsely boast that they were the children of Abraham, and make claim to the sign of circumcision; for they were professedly enemies, and had entirely departed from all godliness: it was then no wonder that their circumcision, which they had impiously profaned, was made no account of. But he afterwards more fully and largely unfolds the same thing.

In the day, he says, *in which thou didst stand on the opposite side*. But the Idumeans might have made this objection, “Why dost thou accuse us for having violently oppressed our brother? for we were not the cause why they were destroyed: they had a quarrel with the Assyrians, we labored to

protect our own interest in the midst of these disturbances; we sought peace with the Assyrians, and if necessity so compelled us, that ought not to be ascribed to us as a crime or blame.” In this way the Idumeans might have made a defense: but the Prophet dissipates all such pretenses by saying, *In the day in which thou didst stand on the opposite side, in the day in which strangers took away his substance, and aliens entered his gates, and cast lots on Jerusalem* — were not thou there? Even thou were as one of them. Now this is emphatically introduced — *Even thou* or, thou also; (*Tu etiam*) for the Prophet exhibits it here as a hateful omen: “It was no wonder that the Assyrians and Chaldeans shed the blood of thy brethren, for they were enemies, they were foreigners, they were a very distant people: but thou, who were of the same blood, thou, whom the bond of religion ought to have restrained, and further, even thou, who oughtest by the very claims of vicinity either to have helped thy brethren, or at least to have condoled with them — yea, thou were so cruel as to have been as one of his enemies: this surely can by no means be endured.”

We now perceive what the Prophet meant by saying, *In the day in which thou didst stand on the opposite side*: it is then as it were, an explanation of the former sentence, lest the Idumeans should make a false excuse by objecting that they had not been violent against their brethren. It was indeed the worst oppression, when they stood over against them; though they were not armed they yet took pleasure in a spectacle so mournful; besides they not only were idle spectators of the calamity of their brethren but were also as it were a part Of their enemies. “Hast thou then not been as one of them?” I shall not proceed farther now.

PRAYER

Grant Almighty God, that as thou hast once received us under thy protection, and hast promised that our salvation would be so much cared for by thee, that whatever Satan and the whole world may contrive, thou wilt yet keep us safe and secure, — O grant, that being endued with perseverance, we may remain within our borders, and be not carried away here and there either by craft or by wicked counsels; but be thou pleased to keep us in genuine integrity, that being protected by thy help, we may, by experience, find that true which thou declarest in thy word, that they who call on thee in truth shall ever know thee to be propitious to them: and

since thou hast already made open to us an access to thee in the person of thy only — begotten Son, O grant, that we the sheep, may rely on him as our shepherd, and resignedly abide under his protection until we be removed from all dangers into that eternal rest, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

LECTURE SEVENTY-FIRST.

<310112> OBADIAH 12-14

12. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress.

12. Et non aspicias in die fratris tui, in die alienationis ejus, et ne gaudeas super filiis Jehudah die exitii eorum, et ne magnifices os tuum in die afflictionis (hoc est, ne magnifice loquaris.)

13. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity;

13. Ne intres in portam populi mei die exitii eorum, ne aspicias etiam tu in afflictione ejus, (in malo ejus,) in die exitii ejus, et ne extendas (manum subaudiendum est) in substantiam ejus in die exitii ejus;

14. Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.

14. Et ne stes super exitum (vel, lacerationem, confractionem,) ad perdendum eos qui evaserint, et ne tradas (vel, concludas) residuos ejus in die afflictionis.

The Prophet enumerates here the kinds of cruelty which the Idumeans exercised towards the Church of God, the children of Abraham, their own kindred. But he speaks by way of prohibition; it is then a personification, by which the Prophet introduces God as the speaker, as though he taught and admonished them on the duties of human kindness. Engraven, indeed, on their hearts ought all these to have been, on account of which he now reproaches them; for by forgetting humanity they had departed from everything right which nature requires. God indeed did not commence by instructing or teaching the Idumeans what were their duties; but the

Prophet reminds them of things which must have been well known to them, and were beyond all dispute true.

Hence he says, *Thou shouldest not look on in the day of thy brother, in the day of his alienation.* The day of Judah he calls that in which God visited him: so the day of Jerusalem is called the day of calamity. *Thou shouldest not* then *look on*: we know in what sense this verb, to look on, is usually taken in Scripture; it is applied to men, when they lie in wait, or very anxiously desire anything, or rejoice at what they witness. The Prophet no doubt takes it metaphorically for taking delight in the misery of the chosen people; for, shortly after, he repeats the same word. *Thou shouldest not* then *look on in the day of thy brother, even in the day of his alienation.* Some take another sense; but I approve of their opinion, who regard this alienation as meaning exile; at the same time, they give not the reason for this metaphor, which is this, — that such a change then took place in the people, that they put on a new appearance. It was then alienation, when God wholly abolished the glory of the kingdom of Judah, and when he took away all his favors, so that the appearance of the people became deformed. *In the day* then *of his alienation*, that is, when the Lord stripped him of his ancient dignity.

Thou shouldest not rejoice, he says, over the children of Judah, in the day of their destruction, that is of their ruin; “thou shouldest not make thy mouth great in the day of affliction”. We now perceive what the Prophet means. Though indeed he seems here to show to the Idumeans their duty, he yet reproves them for having neglected all the laws of humanity, and of having been carried away by their own pride and cruelty. It hence follows that they were worthy of that dreadful vengeance which he has already mentioned. In case then the Idumeans complained that God dealt too severely with them, the Prophet here reminds them, that they in many ways sought such a ruin for themselves, — How so? “Were not thou delighted with the calamity of thy brother? Didst not thou laugh when Judah was distressed? And didst not thou speak loftily in ridicule? Was this outrageousness to be endured? Can the Lord now spare thee, as thou hast been so cruel towards thy brother?” And he repeats the name of brother, for the crime was the more atrocious, as it has been already said, as they showed no regard for those of their own blood. But the Prophet often mentions either affliction, or ruin, or calamity, or evils, or adversity; for it is a feeling naturally implanted in us, that when one is distressed, we

are touched with pity; even when we see our enemies lie prostrate on the ground, our hatred and anger are extinguished, or at least are abated: and all who see even their enemies ill — treated, become, as it were, other men, that is, they put off the anger with which they were previously inflamed. As then this is what is common almost to all men, it appears that the Idumeans must have been doubly and treble barbarous, when they rejoiced at the calamity of their brethren, and took pleasure in a spectacle so sad and mournful, and even spoke proudly, and jeered the miserable Jews; for this, as we have said, is the meaning of the words, to make great the mouth.

It follows, *Thou shouldest not enter the gates of my people in the day of their destruction, nor shouldest thou look on in their calamity.* Probably the Idumeans had made an irruption in company with the Assyrians and Chaldeans, when they ought to have remained at home, and there to lament the slaughter of their brethren. For if I cannot save my friend from death or from a calamity, I shall yet withdraw myself, for I could not bear to look on: but were I constrained to look on my friend, and be not able to succor him in his necessity, I should rather close my eyes; for there is in the eyes, we know, the tenderest sympathy. As then the Idumeans willingly went forth and entered Jerusalem with the enemies, it was hence evident that they were no better than wild beasts. *Thou shouldest not* then, he says, *enter the gates of my people in the day of slaughter, nor shouldest thou especially then, look on.* He again repeats גַּם אַתָּה *gam ate*, thou also, or, especially thou: “If other neighbors do this, yet thou shouldest abstain, for thou art of the same blood; if thou can’t not bring help, show at least some token of grief and of sympathy: but as thou willingly and gladly lookest on their calamities, it is quite evident that there is not in thee a particle of right feeling.”

He afterwards adds, *Thou shouldest not stretch forth thy hand to his substance.* Here he accuses the Idumeans of having been implicated in taking the spoils with other enemies, as though he said, “Ye have not only suffered your brethren to be pillaged, but ye became robbers yourselves. Ye ought to have felt sorrow in seeing them distressed by foreign enemies; but ye have plundered with them, and enriched yourselves with spoils; this certainly is by no means to be endured.”

It follows, *And thou shouldest not stand on the going forth*. The word פֶּרֶק *perek* signifies to break, to dissipate, to rend; hence פֶּרֶק *perek*, as a noun, in Hebrew means rending and breaking. Therefore some take it metaphorically for a place where two ways meet, when one road is cut or divided into two. When the two meet then there is a going forth by two ways; hence they take פֶּרֶק, *perek*, for such a place. But we may simply take it for the rending of the people. Though I am certainly pleased with the first explanation, yet I do not confine the word to that meaning; and I prefer the idea of going forth, as it harmonizes better with the context: Thou hast *stood* then *on the going forth*; and for what purpose? *To destroy those who had escaped, and to stop or to deliver up his remaining captives in the day of affliction*. In short, the Prophet means that the Idumeans occupied all the ways, to intercept the miserable exiles, to whom flight was the only way of safety.

As then the miserable Jews tried by winding outlets to provide for their own safety, the Prophet says that they were intercepted by the Idumeans, lest any of them should escape, and that they were stopped, that afterwards they might be slain by their enemies. Inasmuch as the Assyrians and the Chaldeans were a people far remote from Judea, it is probable that the roads were unknown to them, and that they were afraid of being entrapped; but the Idumeans, who were familiarly acquainted with all their roads, could stand at all the outlets. Some give the following explanation, but it is too frigid: *Thou shouldest not stand for the rending of thy brethren*, that is, thou should not stand still, but strive to extend a helping hand to the distressed: but this, as I have said, is too frigid and strained. *Thou shouldest not* then stand on the going forth *of the roads to destroy*. We now see what the Prophet had in view; to destroy, he says, and whom did they destroy? Even those *who had* already *escaped*. Expressly then is pointed out here the cruelty to which I have referred, that the Idumeans were not contented with the ruin of the city, and the great slaughter which had been made; but in case any had stealthily escaped, they occupied the outlets of the roads, that they might not flee away: and the same thing is meant when he adds, that all were betrayed or stopped who had remained alive in the day of affliction.

We now understand the Prophet's meaning; — that the Idumeans could not complain that God was too severe with them, when he reduced them

to nothing, because they had given examples of extreme cruelty towards their own brethren, and at a time when their calamities ought to have obliterated all hatred and old enmities, as it is usually the case even with men the most alienated from one another. Let us proceed —

<310115> **OBADIAH 15**

15. For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

15. Quia propinquus dies Jehovae super omnes gentes; sicut fecisti fiet tibi; merces tua revertetur in caput tuum.

By saying that *the day of Jehovah was nigh upon all nations*, the Prophet may be regarded as reasoning from the greater to the less: “If God will not spare other nations, how canst thou escape his hand?” In a like manner does Jeremiah speak in chapter 49, (<244912> Jeremiah 49:12) he addresses the Idumeans in these words, ‘Behold, they shall drink of the cup, who have not been by judgment condemned to drink; and shalt thou not taste? by drinking thou shalt drink to the very dregs. He shows then that the Idumeans deserved a double vengeance; for if indeed they were compared with the Assyrians and Chaldeans, the fault of the latter would appear small: the Chaldeans might pretend some causes for the war, they were aliens, they were, in short, professed enemies; but the Idumeans were neighbors and kindred. The same thing might be also said of other nations. But the words may be explained in a simpler manner; and that is, that God would not only take vengeance on one or two nations, but on all. “See,” he says, “a change will take place not only in one corner, but in the whole world. The Lord will thus show that he is the judge of the whole earth. Hence it follows, that the Idumeans also must render an account, for God has resolved to execute judgment on all nations; no one whatever shall be passed by.”

Behold, then, nigh is the day of Jehovah. We have said that the time in which Obadiah prophesied is unknown to us. But it is no matter of wonder that he declares that *nigh is the day of Jehovah*; for the Lord hastens not after the manner of men; but, at the same time, he knows his

own seasons; and this is ever accomplished, that when the ungodly think themselves to be at rest, then sudden destruction overtakes them.

He draws this conclusion, *As thou hast done, so shall it be done to thee*. There seems, however, to be here an implied comparison between the chastisement of the chosen people and the punishment which shall be inflicted on other nations. When the Idumeans saw that the kingdom of Israel and of Judah was trodden under foot, they thought that the children of Abraham were thus punished because they had despised their own Prophets, because they had become immoral and perverse in the extreme. Thus they exempted themselves and others from punishment. Now the Prophet declares that God had been the judge of his people, but that he is also the judge of the whole world, and that this would quickly be made evident. When, therefore, he says, that *nigh was the day of Jehovah*, he had, I have no doubt, a regard, as I have already said, to the chastisement of the Church; as though he said, “As God has proved himself to be one who justly punishes sins with respect to Israel and Judah; so also at length he will ascend his tribunal to judge all the nations; no one, therefore, shall escape punishment. All then in their different conditions shall be constrained to give an account of their actions, for the Lord will spare none: and though he has begun with his Church and his own house, yet there will come afterwards the suitable time to take vengeance, when he will extend his hand to punish all heathen nations.” This, seems to me to be the real meaning.

Rightly then does he conclude, *As then thou hast done, it shall be done to thee*: “Think not that thou shalt be unpunished for having gone against thy brother. It was God’s purpose to exhibit an example of his severity towards others, while he spared thee; but thou hast abused his forbearance; for thou mightest have remained quiet at home: the Lord will then repay thee.” And then he subjoins, *Thy reward shall recoil*, or return, *on thine own head*. Here the Prophet announces what Christ also says

‘With what measure any one measures, it shall be repaid to him,’
(^{<400702>}Matthew 7:2.)

This sentence is worthy of being noticed: for when God leaves the innocent to the will of the ungodly, they think that they may do whatever they please with impunity, as though they were the executioners of God. As then they become thus insolent when the Lord spares them, let us take

notice of what the Prophet says here, — that a reward is prepared for every one, and that whatever cruelty the ungodly may exercise, it shall be returned on their own heads. It follows —

<310116> **OBADIAH 16**

16. For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been.

16. Quia sicuti bibistis super montem sanctum meum, bibent omnes gentes jugiter, bibent (inquam) et sorbebunt; et erunt quasi non sint.

Here Obadiah proceeds farther and says, that God would revenge the wrongs done to his Church. The declaration in the last verse was general, “Behold, on all the nations the day of Jehovah is nigh; as then thou hast done, God will repay thee:” but now he shows that this would be, because God purposed to defend his own servants, (*clientes* — clients;) and as they had been cruelly treated, he would become the avenger of their wrongs; As then *ye have drunk on my holy mountain*, etc. The Prophet, I have no doubt, taking a part for the whole, included in the word drink their triumphs and rejoicings. As then ye have rejoiced on my holy mountain, so also all the nations shall *drink* and continue their excess; *they shall drink up*, so that ye shall utterly perish. But the Prophet appears to me evidently to add here a proof of their avariciousness. He had shortly before accused the Idumeans of having taken away a part of the spoil, together with the foreign nations, when the miserable Jews were plundered. So also, he says now, *Ye have drunk*, in token of triumph and rejoicing.

Ye have then drunk wine on my holy mountain: now drink shall all the nations. This latter drinking is to be taken in a sense different from the former. What then? *Drink they shall, and drink up*, that is, “They shall consume all your substance.” And he afterwards adds, *And drink they shall continually; and they shall be as though they had not been*, that is they shall not cease to eat and to drink until they shall consume whatever is among you. He then intimates that the Idumeans, who had enriched themselves with the spoils of their brethren, and who had also kept feasting in token of their joy on the holy mountain, would hereafter be the

food of others, *for all the nations would drink, and drink them up*. To drink then here is the same as to consume. It follows, (for I am under the necessity of finishing this prophecy today, and time, I hope, will allow me) —

<310117> **OBADIAH 17**

17. But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

17. Et in monte Sion erit evasio, et erit sanctitas (nempe mons ipse;) et possidebit domus Jacob possessiones suas (alii vertunt, eos a quibus possidebantur.

Here the Prophet promises deliverance to the Jews; for other consolations would have been of no great moment, had they, who then were perishing, no hope of being some time restored to safety. The Jews might indeed have objected, and said, “What is it to us, though the Lord may avenge our wrongs? Should the Idumeans be destroyed for our sake, what profit will that be to us? We are in the meantime destroyed and have no hope of deliverance.” The Prophet here meets this objection, and says, *In mount Zion shall be escape*. Though then the Idumeans had attempted to intercept all outlets, as it has been before mentioned, yet God promises here that there would be an escape in mount Zion: he says not, from mount Zion, but in the very mountain. What does this mean? even that God would restore those who might seem then to be lost. Then Obadiah clearly promises that there would be a restoration of the Church.

But we are taught in this place, that the punishment, by which the Lord chastises his people for their sins, is ever for a time. Whenever then God inflicts wounds on his Church, prepared at the same time is the remedy; for God designs not, nor does he suffer, that his own people should be wholly lost. This we may learn from the Prophet’s words, when he says, that there would be escape in Zion. And it was no ordinary comfort for the Jews to know, that even in their extreme decay, there remained for them some hope of deliverance, and that the people, who might appear at the time to be extinct, would yet be saved, and preserved alive, as though they arose from the dead.

He says that mount Zion would *be holiness* or holy, by which he means that God would be mindful of his covenant. As then he had chosen mount Zion where he would be worshipped, the Prophet intimates that God's name was not there involved presumptuously or in vain. Inasmuch as God had chosen this mount for himself, it was holy; for God is said to have profaned the land and the temple, when he forsook them and delivered them up into the hands of enemies. So also now when the Prophet says, that mount Zion would be holy, it is the same as though he had said, that God would have a care for this mountain, because he had once consecrated it to himself, and designed it to be his own habitation. The cause then is put here for its effect. He had said, that the Jews would survive, how much soever like the lost and the dead they might for a time be, — How could such a thing be? The reason is this, — mount Zion shall be holy: it was a dreadful profanation of mount Zion when the temple was destroyed, when the holy vessels were taken away by the Babylonians, when, in short, the enemies showed there every kind of insolence. But when the Lord restored his people, when the altar was built again, and sacrifices were offered, then mount Zion recovered its holiness, that is, God manifested that the grace of his election had not been abolished, for he had again sanctified mount Zion, and thus designed it to be preserved safe.

Holy then *shall be mount Zion*. Were any one disposed to refine more on the Prophet's words, he might say, that it is evidently the manner of our salvation that is intended, when God is said to sanctify or govern us by his Spirit: but the Prophet, I have no doubt, has regard here simply to the election of God.

And the house of Jacob shall again possess his own possessions, that is whatever God has given as an heritage to the children of Abraham, he will restore to them when they return from exile. If any one prefers to take possessions to be those of Edom, I do not object. But yet I think that the real meaning of the Prophet is, that when the children of Israel should return from exile, God would restore to them their ancient country, that they might possess whatever had been promised to their father Abraham. He means then, by their possessions, the whole land, which came by lot into the possession of the chosen people, as it had been promised to Abraham. It follows —

18. And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it.

18. Et erit domus Jacob ignis, et domus Joseph in flammam (flamma, ut respondeat,) et domus Esau erit palea; et ardebunt in ipsis et consument (vorabunt) eos; et non erit quidquam residuum domui Esau, quia Jehova loquutus est.

Here again the Prophet meets a doubt, which might come into the mind of each of them; for the Idumeans were flourishing, and their condition was independent, when the Israelites as well as the Jews were led into exile, and Jerusalem with its temple was destroyed. They might under such circumstances despair; but the Prophet shows, that though for a time the house of Jacob seemed to be dead, yet a fire would be kindled, which would consume the Idumeans, though they were then proud of their power and their wealth, and also of the prosperous issue of the victory over the Jews, for they had been enriched, and well as the Assyrians, by the overthrow of their brethren. A similar mode of speaking Isaiah also adopts; though he directs his discourse, not to the Idumeans, but to others, yet his manner of speaking is the same when he says, that God, the light of Israel, would be a fire and a flame to consume the wicked, (^{<232906>} Isaiah 29:6 .)

But this was fulfilled, when the Lord avenged the cruelty of Edom, though the Jews were then in exile and could not move a finger, when they were without arms, yea, when they were miserable slaves: the Idumeans were even then consumed, by what fire? how was this burning kindled? Even then *the house of Jacob and the house of Joseph* were like a *fire and a flame*. The cause of this ruin, it is true, did not immediately appear to the Idumeans: but we must here look to the purpose of God. Why did God with so much severity punish the Idumeans? Because he intended by this example to show how much he loved his Church. Since then their cruelty was the cause of ruin to the Idumeans, rightly does the prophet say, that the house of Jacob and the house of Joseph would be like a fire and a flame to consume the Idumeans. And it was not a small solace to the miserable exiles, when they understood, that they were still regarded by God in their

depressed condition. Inasmuch then as they were exposed to the reproach and ridicule of all, it pleased God to testify that they were the objects of his care, and that he would, for their sake, destroy whole nations even those who then gloried in their power. We now then see why the Prophet adopted this figurative language. By the house of Joseph, he means as we have said elsewhere the kingdom of Israel; he mentions a part for the whole. It follows —

<310119> OBADIAH 19-20	
19. And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead	19. Et possidebunt meridiem montis Esau, et planitiem Philistim, et possidebunt agros Ephraim et agros Samariae; et Benjamin possidebit Gilead.
20. And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south.	20. Et migratio exercitus hujus filiorum Israel, quod Chananaeorum fuit usque ad Zerphath (vel, qui sunt in Chananaeis,) et migratio Jerusalem, quod in Sepharad, possidebunt (in quam) urbes Australes (vel, meridionales.) F10

The Prophet proceeds with the same subject, — that God would not only gather the remnants of his people from the Babylonian exile, but would restore the exiles, that they might rule far and wide, and that their condition might be better than it was before: for the Prophet, as I think, directs the attention to the first blessing of God, which had been deposited in the hand of Abraham. God had promised to the posterity of Abraham the whole land from Euphrates to the sea. Now this land had never been possessed by the children of Abraham. This happened, as it is well known, through their sloth and ingratitude. David in his time enlarged the borders; but yet he only made those tributaries whom God had commanded to be destroyed. So this blessing had never been fulfilled, because the people put a hindrance in the way. The Prophet now, speaking of the restoration of the Church, tells the people, who would

return from exile, that they were to occupy the country which had been promised to their fathers as though he said, "There will come to you a full and complete inheritance."

Now it is certain that this prophecy has never been completed: we know that but a small portion of the land was possessed by the Jews. What then are we to understand by this prophecy? It does unquestionably appear that the Prophet speaks here of the kingdom of Christ; and we know that the Church was then really restored, and that the Jews not only recovered their former state from which they had fallen, but that their kingdom was increased: for how great became the splendor of the kingdom and of the temple under Christ? This then is what the Prophet now means, when he promises to the Jews the heritage which they had lost; yea, God then enlarged the borders of Judea. Hence he shows that they should not only be restored to their former condition, but that the kingdom would be increased in splendor and wealth, when Christ should come. Let us now run over the words.

Possess then shall they the south of the mount of Esau. The space was no doubt great: even when David reigned, the Jews did not possess that part or south portion of mount Seir. Then the Prophet, as I have said, shows that the borders of the kingdom would be more extensive than they had been. *And the plain*, he says, *of the Philistines.* On that side also the Lord would cause that the Jews would extend farther than their kingdom. *And possess they shall the fields of Ephraim.* Here I will not spend much labor in describing the land: but it is enough for us to understand that the design of the Prophet was to show, that the state of the people after their exile would be far more splendid than it had been before, even under the reign of David. What he means by Gilead is not very clear: but it is not probable that mount Gilead is referred to here, which was not far distant from the tribe of Benjamin, but rather that a town or some place distant from that part, and not included in their portion, is pointed out.

He afterwards adds, *And the migrations of this host of the children of Israel*, etc. There is here an obscurity in the words. The Hebrews by Canaan mean the Illyrians as well as Germans, and also the Gauls: for they say, that the migration, which shall be dispersed in Gaul, and in Germany, and in these far regions, shall possess the southern cities. Now by Zarephath they understand Spain. But we know, as we have elsewhere

said, that the Jews are very bold in their glosses: for they are not ashamed to trifle and to blend frivolous things; and they assert this as though it were evident from history, and easily found out. Thus they prattle about things unknown to them, and this they do without any reason or discrimination. The Prophet, I doubt not, means here that all those territories, which had been formerly promised to the children of Abraham, would come into their possession when the Lord would send his Christ, not only to restore what had fallen, but also to render the state of the people in every way blessed. The import of the whole then is, that the Jews shall not only recover what they had lost, but what had not hitherto been given them to possess: all this the Lord would bestow on them when Christ came. It follows —

<310121> **OBADIAH 21**

21. And saviors shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S.

21. Et ascendent servatores in montem Sion, ad judicandum montem Esau; et erit Jehovae regnum.

Here the Prophet says, that there are in God's hand ministers, the labor of whom he employs to preserve his own people. He alludes here, I have no doubt, to the history of the judges. We indeed know that the people of Israel were often so distressed, that their deliverance was almost incredible; and that yet they were also delivered in such a way as to have made it evident that the hand of God had appeared from heaven. Since this then was well known to the Jews, the Prophet here reminds them that God had still in his hand redeemers, whenever it might please him to gather his people. God then shall send *preservers*, even as he did send them formerly to your fathers. They had indeed found true by experience what the Prophet says here, not only once, but more than ten times. This then ought to have served much to confirm this prophecy.

Ascend then shall they who will judge the mount of Esau, — who, being endued with the power of God and his authority, will execute judgment on mount Seir and on the whole nation, and will avenge the cruelty which Edom had exercised towards the children of Abraham.

But this passage shows, that Christ came not to be the minister of our deliverance and salvation in an ordinary way, but that he became our savior in a special manner; so that he stands alone in that capacity: and this is a very strong argument against the Jews. They confess that the Messiah would be the Redeemer of his people, but they ascribe this office to him in a general way, as they do to David and other kings. But it certainly appears from this passage, that the Messiah would not be of the common class, for saviors would be under him as his ministers. This the Jews dare not to deny, though they grumble: for it would be absurd that he should be one of their number. Since then he was sent to be a Redeemer and Savior in a way different from others, it follows that he is not man only, but that he is the Author of salvation. It would indeed be easy to reply, “Why do you speak to us of many redeemers? Do you not hope for one Savior? If God will commit this office to many in an equal degree, why are there so many glorious promises respecting the Messiah? Why are we ever reminded of him alone? Why is he alone set forth to us as the ground of our salvation?” It hence certainly appears that Christ is to be distinguished from all others, and that others are saviors under his authority; and such were the apostles, and such are all at this day, the labor and ministry of whom God employs to defend and support his Church.

Now he adds, Jehovah’s shall be the kingdom. But as it is certain, that it was God’s purpose to rule among his people after having restored them, in no other way than by the power of Christ, the Prophet, by saying that the kingdom of Christ would be Jehovah’s, means, that it would be really divine, and more illustrious than if he had employed the labor of men. But two things must be here observed by us, — that God himself really rules in the person of Christ, — and that it is the legitimate mode of ruling the Church, that God alone should preside, and hold alone the chief power. Hence it follows, that when God does not appear as the only King, all things are in confusion, without any order. Now God is not called a King by way of an empty distinction: but then only is he regarded a King in reality, when all submit themselves to him, when they are ruled by his word; in short, when all creatures become silent in his presence. To God then belongs the kingdom. We hence see that the Church has no existence, where the word of God does not so prevail in its authority, as to keep down whatever height there is in men, and to bring them under the yoke, so that all may depend on God alone, that all may look up to him, and that he may have all in subjection to himself.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are so scattered in our pilgrimage in this world, that even a dreadful spectacle is presented to our eyes, when we see thy Church so miserably rent asunder, O grant, that being endued with the real power of thy Spirit, and gathered into one, we may so cultivate brotherly kindness among ourselves, that each may strive to help another, and at the same time keep our eyes fixed on Christ Jesus; and though hard contests may await us, may we yet be under his care and protection, and so exercise patience, that having finished our warfare, we may at last enjoy that blessed rest, which thou hast promised to us, and which is laid up for us in heaven, and which has also been purchased for us by the blood of Christ thy Son, one Lord. Amen.

END OF THE COMMENTARIES ON OBADIAH.

A TRANSLATION
OF CALVIN'S VERSION
OF THE PROPHECIES OF
OBADIAH.

CHAPTER 1.

- 1** The vision of Obadiah: Thus saith the Lord Jehovah against Edom,— A rumor have we heard from Jehovah, And a messenger to the nations has been sent,—(423) “Arise ye, and we shall arise against her to battle.”
- 2** Lo, small have I set thee among the nations, Despised greatly wert thou: (425)
- 3** The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, Who dwellest in the clefts of the rock: “Who shall draw me down to the ground?”
- 4** If thou shouldst rise high as the eagle, And if among the clouds thou shouldst set thy nest, Thence shall I draw thee down, saith Jehovah.
- 5** Have thieves come to thee, or night-robbers? How hast thou been reduced to silence? Have they not stolen what sufficed them? Have vintagers come to thee? Have they not left some clusters?—
- 6** How much sought out have been the things of Esau, *And* thoroughly searched his hidden places!

- 7** To the border have they driven thee, All the men of thy confederacy; Deceived thee, prevailed against thee, have they, The men who were at peace with thee; The men who did eat thy bread Have set a wound under thee:— There is in him no understanding!
- 8** Shall I not in that day, saith Jehovah, Destroy the wise from Edom, And understanding from the mount of Esau? Yea, broken down shall be thy valiant ones, O Teman,
- 9** So that cut off shall be every man, From the mount of Esau by slaughter.
- 10** For the oppression of thy brother Jacob, Cover thee shall reproach, And thou shalt be cut off forever.
- 11** In the day when thou didst stand on the other side, In the day when aliens took away his substance, And foreigners entered his gates, And on Jerusalem did cast lots, Even thou wert as one of them.
- 12** But thou shouldest not look on the day of thy brother, In the day of his alienation; Nor shouldest rejoice over the children of Judah, In the day of their destruction; Nor speak with thy mouth proud things, In the day of distress;
- 13** Nor shouldest thou enter the gate of my people, In the day of their destruction; Nor look on him, especially thou, in his distress, In the day of his destruction; Nor stretch *thy hand* to his substance, In the day of his destruction:
- 14** Nor shouldest thou stand on the outlets, To destroy those who were escaping; Nor deliver up his remnants in the day of distress.
- 15** Seeing that near is the day of Jehovah on all nations, As thou hast done, it shall be done to thee, Thy reward shall be returned on thine own head;
- 16** For as ye have drunk on my holy mountain, Drink shall all nations continually; They shall drink and drink up; And they shall be as though they never had been.

- 17** But in mount Zion shall be deliverance, And *Zion* shall be holiness; And possess shall the house of Jacob their own possessions:
- 18** The house of Jacob shall be also a fire, And the house of Joseph a flame, And the house of Esau shall be chaff; And kindled they shall be among them, and consume them; And no remnant shall be to the house of Esau; For *thus* hath Jehovah spoken.
- 19** They shall also possess the south of the mount of Esau, And the plain, even *that* of the Philistines; And they shall possess the fields of Ephraim And the fields of Samaria, And Benjamin *shall possess* Gilead:
- 20** And the emigrants of this host of the children of Israel Shall possess *the land* of the Canaanites to Zarephath; And the emigrants of Jerusalem, what is in Sepharad, Even the southern cities: (451)
- 21** And ascend shall saviors to mount Zion, To judge the mount of Esau; And Jehovah's shall be the kingdom.

FOOTNOTES

^{ft1a} *Newcome* supposes that he prophesied between the taking of Jerusalem in 587 before Christ and the destruction of Idumea, a few years later, by Nebuchadnezzar. Usher, as quoted by *Newcome*, places the destruction of Jerusalem in 588 B.C.; and the siege of Tyre by the Babylonians three years later, that is, in 585; and it was during this siege, which lasted thirteen years, that the *Idumeans*, as well as the Sidonians, the Moabites, and the Ammonites, were subdued by the Babylonian power: so that the threatenings contained in this prophecy were soon executed. — *Ed.*

^{ft2a} Expositors are divided in their opinions as to the priority of the two Prophets, and consequently as to whom of the two was the copyist. As the time cannot be ascertained, our only mode of ascertaining this, are the passages themselves as given by each. It is said that Jeremiah has not presented them in so perfect a form as Obadiah, and that in the latter they appear as the naturally connected parts of his subject, and accordant in style and character with the rest of the prophecy. But the matter is of no great importance, and to discuss it can bring no benefit. — *Ed.*

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accordant in style and character with the rest of the prophecy. But the matter is of no great importance, and to discuss it can bring no benefit.—*Ed.*

FT3 The Septuagint renders the words, “to Edom” — **Ταδε λεγει κυριος ο Θεος τη Ιδουμαία** — “Thus saith the Lord God to Idumea;” which is an exact rendering of the original, for it is, **אדום** — “to Edom.” It was a message from God *to* that people. May we not hence conclude that this prophecy was *sent to* them by Obadiah? They are often personally addressed: and this seems to favor such a supposition. It is indeed true that **ל** prefixed to a word after the verb, to say or to speak, is often rendered, *of*, or, *concerning*; but it is also rendered by, *to*, meaning that the address is made *to* the person.—*Ed.*

FT4 Or the two lines may thus be rendered,—

***A rumor have we heard from Jehovah,
And a messenger to the nations hath he sent.***

The verb, to send, is here active; and so it is rendered in the Septuagint. It is indeed passive in the corresponding passage in Jeremiah; but there are several other instances of variety in the expressions used by the two Prophets, though there be in sense a material agreement.—*Ed.*

FT5 *Blayney*, for very satisfactory reasons, transfers this word to the preceding verse, and then the passage will be almost literally the same with this of Obadiah. The 15th, and the beginning of the 16th in Jeremiah 49 may be thus rendered,—

***15. For, behold, small have I made thee among the nations,
Contemptible among the men of thy terror,
(that is, such as thou didst fear.)***

16. Deceived thee has the pride of thy heart; etc.—Ed.

FT6 It is evidently of the past, and not of the future, that this verse speaks. The corresponding passage in Jeremiah is, in our version, rendered in the future tense, but *Blayney* renders it, as it is, in the past tense. Our version here adopts the past tense in the first line, “I have made,” etc., and the present in the second, “Thou *art*,” etc., contrary to the rule, that when the auxiliary verb is not expressed in the original, the tense of the verbs expressed is to be observed. The two lines should therefore be thus translated, —

*Behold, small have I made thee among the nations;
Despised wert thou exceedingly.*

The reference is, no doubt, as Calvin says, to the poor inheritance assigned to the Edomites, and to the low station they occupied among other nations; and hence their pride and insolence appeared more evident and unreasonable.—*Ed.*

FT7 *Blayney* renders the same words in ^{<244916>}Jeremiah 49:16, “the encirclings of the rock.” but *Parkhurst* renders them “the cracks, or fissures of the rock.”—*Ed.*

FT8 Literally it is, “among the stars,” **בֵּין כּוֹכְבִים**.—*Ed.*

FT9 This word has been by some critics removed to the beginning of the next verse, but as it appears for no sufficient reasons, while indeed there is nothing in the context that requires such a change.—*Ed.*

FT10 The rendering of the first of these two verses is materially different from our version. There are difficulties here which are considerable. Our version in the first part follows Septuagint; and others have followed the same, such as *Newcome* and *Henderson*, though *Junius* and *Tremulius* and *Dathius* have rendered it materially the same with Calvin, and certainly more in consistency with the Hebrew text. The following may be considered as a literal version of the whole verse:—

*19. And they shall inherit the south, the mount of Esau,
And the plain, even that of the Philistines,
And they shall inherit the field of Ephraim and the field of Samaria,
And of Benjamin, even Gilead.*

The word “to possess” does not convey the meaning of **יָרַשׁ**, which means to inherit, or to possess by inheritance, as *Junius* and *Tremelius* render it—*haereditario jure possidebunt*—“They shall possess by an hereditary right.” And this exactly corresponds with Calvin’s explanation. Though our version follows the Septuagint in the two first lines, it yet departs from it the two last.

But the 20th verse is the most difficult. “Captivity” is more properly “migration” or transmigration, as Calvin renders it. Then follow the words, **הַחֵל-חֲזָה לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**, literally, in my view, “the beginning, this, to the children of Israel.” So the Septuagint takes the word **הַחֵל**, as meaning “beginning,” and not “host:” it wants the **ו** except in three

copies, and it always has this, when it means a host. I propose the following translation:—

*And the migration, which commenced with the children of Israel,
Shall inherit what the Canaanites had as far as Sarephath;
And the migration from Jerusalem, which are in Saphrad,
The cities of the south.*

The latter verse is a fuller explanation of the former; and, as is the case commonly in Hebrew, when two things previously mentioned are referred to, the order is reversed, the last particular is mentioned first, so it is here. The verb “inherit” is in the last clause in Hebrew; but the idiom of our language requires it to be in the first.—*Ed.*