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COMMENTARY

**COMMENTARY
ON THE PROPHET
ZEPHANIAH**

by John Calvin

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THE COMMENTARIES

OF JOHN CALVIN

ON THE PROPHET

ZEPHANIAH

CALVIN'S PREFACE TO ZEPHANIAH.

ZEPHANIAH is placed the last of the Minor Prophets who performed their office before the Babylonian Captivity; and the inscription shows that he exercised his office of teaching at the same time with Jeremiah, about thirty years before the city was destroyed, the Temple pulled down, and the people led into exile. Jeremiah, it is true, followed his vocation even after the death of Josiah, while Zephaniah prophesied only during his reign.

The substance of his Book is this: He first denounces utter destruction on a people who were so perverse, that there was no hope of their repentance; — he then moderates his threatening, by denouncing God's judgments on their enemies, the Assyrians, as well as others, who had treated with cruelty the Church of God; for it was no small consolation, when the Jews heard that they were so regarded by God, that he would undertake their cause and avenge their wrongs. He afterwards repeats again his reproofs, and shortly mentions the sins which then prevailed among the elect people of God; and, at the same time, he turns his discourse to the faithful, and exhorts them to patience, setting before them the hope of favor, provided they ever looked to the Lord; and provided they relied on the gratuitous covenant which he made with Abraham, and doubted not but that he would be a Father to them, and also looked, with a tranquil mind, for that redemption which had been promised to them. This is the sum of the whole Book.

CHAPTER 1

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTEENTH

<360101> ZEPHANIAH 1:1

1. The word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah

1. Sermo Jehovahae, qui fuit ad Zephaniam, filium Chusi, filii Gedoliae, filii Amariae, filii Chizkiaie, in diebus Josiae, filii Amon, regis Jehudah.

ZEPHANIAH first mentions the time in which he prophesied; it was under the king Josiah. The reason why he puts down the name of his father Amon does not appear to me. The Prophet would not, as a mark of honor, have made public a descent that was disgraceful and infamous. Amon was the son of Manasseh, an impious and wicked king; and he was nothing better than his father. We hence see that his name is recorded, not for the sake of honor, but rather of reproach; and it may have been that the Prophet meant to intimate, what was then well known to all, that the people had become so obdurate in their superstitions, that it was no easy matter to restore them to a sound mind. But we cannot bring forward anything but conjecture; I therefore leave the matter without pretending to decide it.

With regard to the pedigree of the Prophet, I have mentioned elsewhere what the Jews affirm — that when the Prophets put down the names of their fathers, they themselves had descended from Prophets. But Zephaniah mentions not only his father and grandfather, but also his great-grandfather and his great-great-grandfather; and it is hardly credible that they were all Prophets, and there is not a word respecting them in Scripture. I do not think, as I have said elsewhere, that such a rule is well-founded; but the Jews in this case, according to their manner, deal in trifles; for in things unknown they hesitate not to assert what comes to their

minds, though it may not have the least appearance of truth. It is possible that the father, grandfather, the great-grandfather, and the great-great-grandfather of the Prophet, were persons who excelled in piety; but this also is uncertain. What is especially worthy of being noticed is — that he begins by saying that he brought nothing of his own, but faithfully, and, as it were, by the hand, delivered what he had received from God.

With regard, then, to his pedigree, it is a matter of no great moment; but it is of great importance to know that God was the author of his doctrine, and that Zephaniah was his faithful minister, who introduced not his own devices, but was only the announcer of celestial truth. Let us now proceed to the contents -

<360102>ZEPHANIAH1:2, 3	
2. I will utterly consume all <i>things</i> from off the land, saith the LORD.	2. Perdendo perdam (<i>vel</i> , colligendo colligam) omnia ex superficie terrae, dicit Jehova.
3. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD	3. Perdam (<i>vel</i> , colligam) hominem et bestiam; perdam autem avem coelorum, et pisces maris; et offenticula erunt impiis; et excidam hominem e superficie terrae, dicit Jehova.

It might seem at the first view that the Prophet dealt too severely in thus fulminating against his own nation; for he ought to have begun with doctrine, as this appears to be the just order of things. But the Prophet denounces ruin, and shows at the same time why God was so grievously displeased with the people. We must however remember, that the Prophet, living at the same period with Jeremiah, had regard to the stubbornness of the people, who had been already with more than sufficient evidence proved to have been guilty. Hence he darts forth as of a sudden and denounces the wickedness of the people, which had been already exposed; so there was to be no more contention on the subject, for their iniquity had become quite ripe. And no doubt it was ever the object of the Prophets to unite their endeavors so as to assist one another: and this united effort

ought ever to be among all the servants of God, that no one may do anything apart, but with joined efforts they may promote the same object, and at the same time strive mutually to confirm the common truth. This is what our Prophet is now doing.

He knew that God would have used various means to restore them, had not the corruption of the people become now past recovery. Having observed that all others had spent their labor in vain, he directly attacks the wicked men who had, as it were designedly, cast aside every fear of God, and shook off every shame. Since, then, it was openly evident that with determined rebellion they resisted God, it was no wonder that the Prophet began with so much severity.

But here a difficulty meets us. He said in the first verse, that he thus spoke under Josiah; but we know that the land was then cleansed from its superstitions. For we learn, that when that pious king attained manhood, he labored most strenuously to restore the pure worship of God; and when all places were full of wicked superstitions, he not only constrained the tribe of Judah to adopt the true worship of God, but he also stimulated his neighbors who had remained and were dispersed through the land of Israel. Since, then, the pious king had strenuously and courageously promoted the interest of true religion, it seems a wonder that God was still so much displeased. But we must remember, that though Josiah sincerely worshipped God, yet the people were not really changed; for it has often happened, that God roused the chief men and leaders, while few, or hardly any, followed them, but only yielded a feigned obedience. This was no doubt the case in the time of Josiah; the hearts of the people were alienated from God and true religion, so that they chose rather to rot in their filth than to return to the true worship of God. And that this was the case soon appeared by the event; for Josiah did not reign long after he had cleansed the land from its defilements, and Jehoahaz succeeded him; and then the people immediately relapsed into their idolatry; and though for three months only his successor reigned, yet true religion was in that short time abolished. It is hence an obvious conclusion, that the people had ever been wedded to impiety, and that its roots were hidden in their hearts; though they apparently pretended to worship God, and, in order to please the king, embraced the worship divinely prescribed in their law; yet the event proved that it was a mere act of dissimulation, yea, of perfidy. Then after Jehoahaz followed Jehoiakim, and no better was their condition down to

the time of Zedekiah; in short, no remedy could be found for their unhealable wound.

It hence plainly appears, that though Josiah made use of all means to revive the true and unadulterated worship of God in Judea, he did not yet gain his object. And we hence clearly learn how hard were the trials he sustained, seeing that he effected nothing, though at great hazard he attempted to restore the worship of God. When he found that he labored in vain, he no doubt had to contend with great difficulties; and this we know by our own experience. When hope of success shines on us, we easily overcome all troubles, however arduous our work may be; but when we see that we strive in vain, we become dejected: and when we see that our labor succeeds only for a few years, our spirit grows faint. Josiah surmounted these two difficulties; for the perverseness of the people was sufficiently evident, and he was also reminded by two Prophets, Jeremiah and Zephaniah, that the people would still cherish their impious perverseness. When, therefore, he plainly saw that his labor was almost in vain, he might have fainted in the middle of his course, or, as they say, at the starting-place. And since the benefit was so small during his reign, what could he have hoped after his death?

This example ought at this day to be carefully observed: for though God now appears to the world in full light, yet very few there are who submit themselves to his word; and of this small number fewer still there are who sincerely and without any dissimulation embrace sound doctrine. We indeed see how great is their inconstancy and indifference. For they who pretend great zeal for a time very soon vanish and fall away. Since then the perversity of the world is so great, sufficient to deject the minds of God's servants a hundred times, let us learn to look to Josiah, who in his own time left undone nothing, which might serve to establish the true worship of God; and when he saw that he effected but little and next to nothing, he still persevered, and with firm and invincible greatness of mind proceeded in his course.

We may also derive hence an admonition no less useful not to regard ours as the golden age, because some portion of men profess the pure worship of God: for many, by no means wicked men, think, that almost all mortals are like angels, as soon as they testify in words their approbation of the gospel: and the sacred name of Reformation is at this day profaned, when

any one who shows as it were by a nod only that he is not wholly an enemy to the gospel, is immediately lauded as a person of extraordinary piety. Though then many show some regard for religion, let us yet know that among so large a number there are many hypocrites, and that there is much chaff mixed with the wheat: and that our senses may not deceive us, we may see here, as in a mirror, how difficult it is to restore the world to the obedience of God, and utterly to root up all corruptions, though idols may be taken away and superstitions be abolished. No doubt Josiah had regard to everything calculated to cleanse the Church, and had recourse to the advice of Jeremiah and also of Zephaniah; we yet see that he did not attain the object he wished, for God now became more grievously displeased with his people than under Manasseh, or under Amon. These wicked kings had attempted to extinguish all true religion; they had cruelly raged against all God's servants, so that Jerusalem became almost drenched with innocent blood: and yet God seems here to have manifested greater displeasure under Josiah than during the previous cruelty and so many impieties. But as I have already said, there is no reason why we should despond, though the world by its ingratitude may close up the way against us; and however much may Satan also by this artifice strive to discourage us, let us still perseveringly go on according to the duties of our calling.

But it may be now asked, why God denounces his vengeance on *the beasts of the field, the birds of heaven, and the fishes of the sea*; for how much soever the Jews may have provoked him by their sins, innocent animals ought to have been spared. If a son is not to be punished for the fault of his father, ^{<261804>}Ezekiel 18:4, but that the soul that has sinned is to die, why did God turn his wrath against fishes and other animals? This seems to have been a hasty and unreasonable infliction. But let this rule be first borne in mind — that it is preposterous in us to estimate God's doings according to our judgment, as froward and proud men do in our day; for they are disposed to judge of God's works with such presumption, that whatever they do not approve, they think it right wholly to condemn. But it behaves us to judge modestly and soberly, and to confess that God's judgments are a deep abyss: and when a reason for them does not appear, we ought reverently and with due humility to hook for the day of their full revelation. This is one thing. Then it is meet at the same time to remember, that as animals were created for man's use, they must undergo a lot in common with him: for God made subservient to man both the birds of

heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and all other animals. It is then no matter of wonder, that the condemnation of him, who enjoys a sovereignty over the whole earth, should reach to animals. And we know that the world was not made subject to corruption willingly — that is, naturally; but because the contagion from Adam's fall diffused itself through heaven and earth. Hence the sun and the moon, and all the stars, and also all the animals, the earth itself, and the whole world, bear marks of God's wrath, not because they have provoked it through their own fault, but because the whole world is involved in man's curse. The reason then is, because all things were created for the sake of man. Hence there is no ground to conclude, that God acts with too much severity when he executes his vengeance on innocent animals, for he can justly involve in the same ruin with man whatever he has created for his use.

But the reason also is sufficiently plain, why the Prophet speaks here of the beasts of the earth, the fishes of the sea, and the birds of heaven: for we find that men grow torpid, or rather stupid in their own indifference, except they are forcibly roused. It was, therefore, necessary for the Prophet, when he saw the people so hardened in their wickedness, and that he had to do with men past recovery, to set clearly before them these judgments of God, as though he had said — “Ye lie down securely, and indulge yourselves, when God is coming forth prepared for vengeance: but his wrath shall not only proceed against you, but will also lay hold on the harmless animals; for ye shall see a horrible judgment executed on your oxen and asses, on the birds and the fishes. What will become of you when God's wrath shall be thus kindled against the unhappy creatures who have committed no sins? Shall ye indeed escape unpunished?” We now understand why the Prophet does not speak here of men only, but collects with them the beasts of the earth, the fishes of the sea, and the birds of the air.

He says first, *By removing I will remove all things from the face of the land*; he afterwards enumerates particulars: but immediately after he clearly shows, that God would not act rashly and inconsiderately while executing his vengeance, for his sole purpose was to punish the wicked, *There shall be*, he says, *stumblingblocks to the ungodly*;^{f1} it is the same as though he said — “When I cite to God's tribunal both the fishes of the sea and the birds of heaven, think not that God's controversy is with these creatures which are void of reason, but they are to sustain a part of God's

vengeance, which ye have through your sins deserved.” The Prophet then does here briefly show, that what he had before threatened brute creatures with, would come upon them on men’s account; for God’s design was to execute vengeance on the wicked; and as he saw that they were extremely torpid, he tried to awaken them by manifest tokens, so that they might see God the avenger as it were in a striking picture. And at the same time he also adds, *I will remove man from the face of the land*. He does not speak now of fishes or of other animals, but refers to men only. Hence appears more clearly what I have said — that the Prophet was under the necessity of speaking as he did, owing to the insensibility of the people. He now adds —

<360104>ZEPHANIAH 1:4	
4. I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, <i>and</i> the name of the Chemarims with the priests;	4. Et extendam manum meam super Jehudah, et super omnes incolas Jerusalem; et excidam ex loco hoc reliquias Baal, et nomen cultorum cum sacerdotibus.

The Prophet explains still more clearly why he directed his discourse in the last verse against the beasts of the earth and the birds of heaven, even for this end — that the Jews might understand that God was angry with them. *I will stretch forth, he says, my hand on Judah and on Jerusalem*. God, then, by executing his vengeance on animals, intended to exhibit to the Jews, as in a picture, the dreadfulness of his wrath, which yet they despised and regarded as nothing. The stretching forth of God’s hand I have elsewhere explained; and it means even this — that he stretches forth his hand when he acts in an unusual manner, and employs means beyond what is common. We indeed know that God has no hands, and we also know that he performs all things by his command alone: but as everything seen in the world is called the work of his hands, so he is said to stretch forth his hand when he mentions a work that is remarkable and worthy of being remembered. In a like manner, when I intend to do some slight work, I only move my hand; but when I have some difficult work to do, I prepare myself more carefully, and also stretch forth my arms. This metaphor,

then, is intended only for this purpose, to render men more attentive to God's works, when he is set forth as stretching forth his hand.

But he says, on *Judah* and on the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*. The kingdom of Israel had now been abolished, and the ten tribes had been led into exile; and a few only of the lowest and the poorest remained. The Jews thought themselves safe for ever, because they had escaped that calamity. This is the reason why the Prophet declares that God's judgment was impending not only over the kingdom of Judah, but also over the holy city, which thought itself exempt from all such evil, because there were the sacrifices performed, and there was the royal city, and, in short, because God had testified that his habitation was to be there for ever. Since, then, by this vain confidence the inhabitants of Jerusalem deceived themselves and others, Zephaniah specifically addresses them. And as he had before spoken of the wicked, he intended here, no doubt, sharply to reprove the Jews, as though he said by way of anticipation, There is no reason for you to enquire who are the wicked; for ye yourselves are they, even ye who are the holy people of God and God's chosen inheritance, ye who are the race of Abraham, who flatter yourselves so much on account of your excellency; ye are the wicked, who have not hitherto ceased to provoke the vengeance of God. And at the same time he shows, as it were by the finger, some of their sins, though he mentions others afterwards: but he speaks now of their superstitions.

I will cut off, he says, *the remnants of Baal and the name of Chamerim*. The severity of the Prophet may seem here again to be excessive, for being so incensed against superstitions which had been abolished by the great zeal and singular diligence of the king; but, as we have already intimated, he regarded not so much the king as the people. For though they dared not openly to adulterate God's worship, they yet cherished those corruptions at home to which they had before been accustomed, as we see to be done at this day. For when it is not allowed to worship idols, many mutter their prayers in secret and invoke their idols: and, in short, they are restrained only by the fear of men from manifesting their own impiety; and in the meantime, they retain before God the same abominations. So it was in the time of Josiah; the people were wedded to their corruptions, and this we may easily conclude from the words of Zephaniah: for the remnants of Baal were not seen in the temple, nor in the streets, nor in their chapels, nor in the high places; but their hidden impiety is here discovered by the

Spirit of God; and no doubt their sin was the more heinous and less excusable, because the people refused to follow their pious leader. It was indeed the most abominable ingratitude; for when they saw that the right worship was restored to them, they preferred to remain fixed in their own filth, rather than to return to God, even when they had liberty to do so, and also when that pious king extended his hand to them.

As to the word כַּמְרִים, *camerim*, it designated either the worshipers of Baal or some such men as our monks at this day: and they are supposed by some to have been thus called, because they were clothed in black vestments; while others think that they derived this name from their fervor, because they were madly devoted to their superstitions, or because they had marks on their foreheads, or because they imposed, as is commonly the case, on the simple by the ardor of their zeal. The name is also found in ^{<122301>}2 Kings 23:1 in the account given of Josiah: for it is said there, that the כַּמְרִים, *camerim*, were taken away, together with other abominations of superstition. But as Zephaniah connects priests with them, it is probable that they were a kind of people like the monks, who did not themselves offer sacrifices, but were a sort of attendants, who undertook vows and offered prayers in the name of the whole people. For what some think, that they were thus called because they burnt incense, appears not to me probable; for then they must have been priests. They were then inferior to the sacrificers, and occupying a station between them and the people, like the monks and hermits of this day, who deceive foolish men by their sanctity. Such, then, were the Camerim.^{f2}

But as Josiah could not attain his object, so as immediately to cleanse the land from these pollutions, we need not wonder that at this day we are not able immediately to remove superstitions from the world: but let us in the meantime ever proceed in our course. Let those endued with authority, who bear the sword, that is, all magistrates, perform their office with greater diligence, inasmuch as they see how difficult and protracted is the contest with the ministers of idolatry. Let also the ministers of the gospel earnestly cry against idolatry, and all ungodly ceremonies, and not desist. Though they may not effect as much as they wish, yet let them follow the example of Josiah. If God should in the meantime thunder from heaven, let them not be discouraged, but, on the contrary, know that their labor is approved by him, and never doubt of their own safety; for though all were destroyed, their godly efforts would not be in vain, nor fail of a reward

before God. Thus, then, ought all God's servants to animate themselves, each in his particular sphere and vocation, whenever they have to contend with superstitions, and with such corruptions as vitiate and adulterate the pure worship of God.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are so prone to corruptions, and so easily turn from the right course after having commenced it, and so easily degenerate from the truth once known, — O grant, that, being strengthened by thy Spirit, we may persevere to the end in the right way which thou showest to us in thy word, and that we may also labor to restore the many who abandon themselves to various errors; and though we may effect nothing, let us not yet be led away after them, but remain firm in the obedience of faith, until having at length finished all these contests, we shall be gathered into that blessed rest which is prepared for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND NINETEENTH

<360105> ZEPHANIAH 1:5

5. And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship *and* that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham;

5. Et super eos qui adorant super tecta militiam coelorum, et eos qui adorant et jurant per Jehovam, et jurant per regem suum.

ZEPHANIAH pursues the subject contained in the verse I explained yesterday. For as the majority of the people still adhered to their superstitions, though the pure worship of the law had been restored by Josiah, the Prophet threatens here, that God would punish such ingratitude. As then he had spoken in the last verse of the worshipers of Baal and their sacrifices, so now he proceeds farther — that the Lord would execute vengeance on the whole people, who prayed to the host of heaven, or bowed themselves down before the host of heaven. It is well known that those stars are thus called in Scripture to which the gentiles ascribed, on account of their superior lustre, some sort of divinity. Hence it was, that they worshipped the sun as God, called the moon the queen of heaven, and also paid adoration to the stars. The people, then, did not only sin in worshipping Baal, but were also addicted to many superstitions, as we see to be the case whenever men degenerate from the genuine doctrine of true religion; they then seek out various inventions on all sides, so that they observe no limits and keep within no boundaries.

But he says, that they *worshipped* the stars on their *roofs*. It is probable that they chose this higher place, as interpreters remind us, because they thought that they were more seen by the stars the nearer they were to them. For as men are gross in their ideas they never think God propitious to them except he exhibits some proof or sign of a bodily presence; in short, they always seek God according to their own earthly notions. Since, then, the Jews thought that there were so many Gods as there are stars in heaven, it is no wonder that they ascended to the roofs of their houses, that they might be, as it were, in the sight of their gods, and thus not lose

their labor; for the superstitious never think that their devotion is observed by God, unless they have before their eyes, as we have just said, some sign of his presence.

We now then see how this verse stands connected with the last. God declares that he would punish all idolaters; but as the Jews worshipped Baal, the Prophet first condemned that strange religion; and now he adds other devices, to which the Jews perversely devoted themselves; for they worshipped also all the stars, ascribing to them some sort of divinity. Then he mentions all those who *worshipped* and *swore* by *their own king*, and swore by *Jehovah*.

By these last words the Prophet intimates, that the Jews had not so repudiated the law of God but that they boasted that they still worshipped the God who had adopted them, and by whom they had been redeemed, who had commanded the temple to be built for him, and an altar on mount Sion. They then did not openly reject the worship of the true God, but formed such a mixture for themselves, that they joined to the true God their own idols, as we see to be the state of things at this day under the Papacy. It seems a sufficient excuse to foolish men that they retain the name of God; and they confidently boast that the true God is worshipped by them; and yet we see that they mix together with this worship many of the delusions of Satan; for under the Papacy there is no end to their inventions. When any devise some peculiar mode of worship, it is then connected with the rest; and thus they form such a mixture, that from one God, divided into many parts, they bring forth a vast troop of deities. As then at this day the Papists worship God and idols too, so Zephaniah had to condemn the same wickedness among the Jews.

We here learn that God's name was not then wholly obliterated, as though the world had openly fallen away from God; for though they worshipped Jupiter, Mercury, Apollo, and other fictitious gods, they yet professed to worship the only true and eternal God, the Creator of heaven and earth. What then was it that the Prophet condemned that they were not content with what the law simply and plainly prescribed, but that they devised for themselves various and strange modes of worship; for when men take to themselves such a liberty as this, they no longer worship the true God, how much soever they may pretend to do so, inasmuch as God repudiates all spurious modes of worship, as he testifies especially in Ezekiel 20 —

Go ye, he says, worship your idols. He shows that all kinds of worship are abominable to him whenever men depart in any measure from his pure word. For we must hold this as the main principle — that obedience is more valued by God than all sacrifices. Whenever men run after their own inventions they depart from the true God; for they refuse to render to him what he principally requires, even obedience.

But our Prophet speaks according to the common notions of men; for they pretended to be the true worshippers of God, while they still adhered to their own inventions. They did not, indeed, properly speaking, worship the true God; but as they thought, and openly professed to do this, Zephaniah, making this concession, says — God will not suffer his own worship to be thus profaned: ye seek to blend it with that of your idols; this he will not endure. Ye worship the true God, and ye worship your idols; but he would have himself to be worshipped alone; and this he deserves. But the partition which ye make is nothing else than the mangling of true worship; and God will not have himself to be thus in part worshipped. We now understand what the Prophet means here; for the Jews covered their abominations with the pretext that their purpose was to worship the God of Abraham: the Prophet does not simply deny this to be done by them, but declares that this worship was useless and disapproved by God; nay, he proceeds farther, and says that this worship, made up of various inventions, was an abominable corruption which God would punish; for he can by no means bear that there should be such an alliance — that idols should be substituted in his place, and that a part of his glory should be transferred to the inventions of men. This is the true meaning.

We hence learn how greatly deceived the Papists are, who think it enough, provided they depart not wholly from the worship of the only true God; for God allows and approves of no worship except when we attend to his voice, and turn not aside either to the left hand or to the right, but acquiesce only in what he has prescribed.

It is nothing strange that he connects swearing with worship, for it is a kind of divine worship. Hence the Scripture, stating a part for the whole, often mentions swearing in this sense, as including the service due to God. But the Prophet pronounces here generally a curse on all the superstitious, who worshipped fictitious gods; and then he adds one kind of worship, and that is swearing. I shall not here speak at large, nor is it — necessary,

on the subject of swearing. We know that the use of an oath is lawful when God is appealed to as a witness and a judge, on important occasions; for God's name may be interposed when a matter requires proof, and when it is important; but God's name is not to be introduced thoughtlessly. Hence two things are especially required in an oath — that all who swear by his name should present themselves with reverence before his tribunal, and acknowledge him to be the avenger if they take his name falsely or inconsiderately. This is one thing. Then the matter itself, on account of which we swear, must be considered; for if men allow themselves to swear by God's name respecting things which are trifling and frivolous, it is a shameful profanation, and by no means to be borne. For it is a singular favor on the part of God, that he allows us to take his name when there is any controversy among us, and when a confirmation is necessary. As then we thus receive through kindness the name of God, it is surely a great favor; for how great is the sanctity of that name, though it serves even earthly concerns? God then does so far accommodate himself to us, that it is lawful for us to swear by his name. Hence a greater seriousness ought to be observed by us in oaths, so that no one should dare to interpose an oath except when necessity requires; and we should also especially take heed lest God be called a witness to what is false. For how great a sacrilege it is to cover a falsehood with his name, who is the eternal and immutable truth! They then who swear falsely by his name change God, as far as they can, into what he is not. We now sufficiently understand how swearing is a kind of divine worship, because his honor is thereby given to God; for his majesty is, as it were, brought before us, and as it is his peculiar office to know and to discover hidden things, and also to maintain the truth, this his own work is ascribed to him. Now when any one swears by a mortal, or by the sun, or by the moon, or by creatures, he deprives God in part of his own honor.

We hence see that in superstitious oaths there was a clear proof of idolatry. This is the reason why the Prophet here condemns those who did *swear by Jehovah and by Malkom*; that is, who joined their idols with the true and eternal God when they swore. For it is a clear precept of God's law, 'By the name of thy God shalt thou swear.' ^{<050613>} Deuteronomy 6:13. And when the Prophets speak of the renovation of the Church, they use this form — 'Ye shall swear by the name of God;' 'To me shall bend every knee;' 'Every tongue shall swear to me.' What does all this mean?

The whole world shall acknowledge me as the true God; and as every knee shall bow to me, so every one will submit himself to my judgment. We may hence doubtlessly conclude, that God is deprived of his right, whenever we swear by the sun, or by the moon, or by the dead, or by any creatures.

This evil has been common in all ages; and it prevails still at this day under the Papacy. They swear by the Virgin, by angels, and by the dead. They do not think that they thus take away anything from the sovereignty of the only true God; but we see what he declares respecting them. The Papists therefore foolishly excuse themselves, when they swear by their saints: for they cannot elude the charge of sacrilege, which the Holy Spirit has stamped with perpetual infamy, since he has said, that all those are abominable in the sight of God who swear by any other name than his own: and the reason is evident, for the sun, moon, and stars, and also dead or living men, are honored with the name of God, when they are set up as judges. For they who swear by the sun, do the same as though they said — The sun is my witness and judge; that is, The sun is my God. They who swear by the name of a king, or as profane men swore formerly, By the genius of their king, ascribe to a mortal what is peculiar to the true God alone. But when any one swears by heaven or the temple, and does not think that there is any divinity in the heavens or in the temple, it is the same as though he swore by God himself, as it appears from ^{<402320>}Matthew 23:20-22; and Christ, when he forbade us to swear by heaven or by the earth, did not condemn such modes of swearing as inconsistent with his word, but as only useless and vain. At the same time he showed that God's name is profaned by such expressions: 'They who swear by heaven, swear also by him who inhabits heaven; they who swear by the temple, swear also by him who is worshipped in the temple, and to whom sacrifices are offered.' When one swears by his head or by his life, it is a protestation, as though he said — As my life is dear to me. But they who swear by the saints, either living or dead, ascribe to mortals what is due to God. They who swear by the sun, place a dead created thing on the throne of God himself.

As to the term מלכם, *melkom*, it may be properly rendered, their king; for מלך, *melak*, as it is well known, means a king; but it is here put in construction, מלכם, *melkom*, their king; *they swear by their own, king.*^{f3}

The Prophet, I doubt not, alludes to the word מֹלֶךְ, *Molok*, which is derived from the verb, to reign: for though that word was commonly used by all as a proper name, it is yet certain that that false god was so called, as though he was a king: and the Prophet increases the indignity by saying — *They swear by Malkom*. He might have simply said, They swear by Moloch; but he says, *They swear by Malkom*; that is, They forget that I am their king, and transfer my sovereignty to a dead and empty image. God then does here, by an implied contrast, exaggerate the sin of the Jews, as they sought another king for themselves, when they knew that under his protection they always enjoyed a sure and real safety. Let us now proceed

<360106> ZEPHANIAH 1:6	
6. And them that are turned back from the LORD; and <i>those</i> that have not sought the LORD, nor enquired for him.	6. Et qui retro aguntur, ne sequantur Jehovam, (<i>ad verbum est</i> , de-post Jehovam.) et qui non quaerunt Jehovam, neque investigant eum.

The Prophet seems here to include, as it were, in one bundle, the proud despisers of God, as well as those idolaters of whom he had spoken. It may yet be, that he describes the same persons in different words, and that he means that they were addicted to their own superstitions, because they were unwilling to serve God sincerely and from the heart, and even shunned everything that might lead their attention to true religion. And this view I mostly approve; for what some imagine, that their gross contempt of God is here pointed out, is not sufficiently supported. I therefore rather think that the idolaters are here reproved, that they might not suppose that they could by subterfuges wash away their guilt; for they were wont to cover themselves with the shield of ignorance, when they were overcome, and their impiety was fully proved: I did not think so; but, on the contrary, my purpose was to worship God. Since, then, the superstitious are wont to hide themselves under the covering of ignorance, the Prophet here defines the idolatry of the people, and briefly shows that it was connected with obstinacy and wickedness.

They did *not seek Jehovah*; but, on the contrary, they turned willfully away from him, and sought, as it were designedly, to extinguish true religion. Nor was it to be wondered at, that so grievous and severe a sentence was pronounced on them; for they had been taught by the law how God was to be served. How was it, then, that errors so gross had crept in? Doubtless, God had kindled the light of celestial truth, which clearly showed the way of true religion; but as men ever seek to perform some frivolous trifles, the Israelites and the Jews, when they felt ashamed openly and manifestly to reject the true God, labored at the same time to add many ceremonies, that their impiety might be thus concealed. This is the reason why the Prophet says that they turned back; that is, that they could not be excused on the ground of ignorance, but that they were perfidious and apostates, who had preferred their own idols to the true God; though they knew that he could not be rightly worshipped, but according to the rule prescribed in the law, they yet neglected this, and heaped together many superstitions.

And, doubtless, we shall find that the fountain of all false worship is this — that men are unwilling truly and from the heart to serve God; and, at the same time, they wish to retain some appearance of religion. For there is nothing omitted in the law that is needful for the perfect worship of God: but as God requires in the law a spiritual worship, hence it is that men seek hiding-places, and devise for themselves many ceremonies, that they may turn back from God, and yet pretend that they come to him. While they sedulously labor in their own ceremonies, it is indeed true that the worship of God and religion are continually on their lips: but, as I have said, it is all hypocrisy and deception; for they accumulate ceremonies, that there might be something intervening between God and them. It is not, therefore, without reason that the Prophet here accuses the Jews that they *turned back from Jehovah, and that they sought him not*. How so? For there was no need of a long, or of a difficult, or of a perplexed enquiry; for the Lord had freely offered himself to them. How, then, was it that they were blind in the midst of light, except that they knowingly and willfully followed their own inventions?^{f4}

The same is the case at this day with the Papists: for though they may glamour a hundred times that they seek to worship God, it is quite evident that they willfully go astray; inasmuch as they so delight themselves with

their own inventions, that they do not purely and from the heart devote and consecrate themselves to God.

We now, then, see that this verse was added, as an explanation, by the Prophet, that he might deprive the Jews of their false plea of ignorance, and show that they sinned willfully; for they would have been sufficiently taught by the law, had they not adopted their own inventions, which dazzled their eyes and all their senses. It follows —

<360107>ZEPHANIAH 1:7-9	
7. Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD <i>is</i> at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.	7. Tace a facie Domini Jehovae, quia propinquus dies Jehova, quia paravit Jehova sacrificium, (<i>vel</i> , ordinavit, [הכין].) sanctificavit invitatos suos.
8. And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel.	8. Et erit, in die sacrificii Jehovae tunc visitabo super Principes, et super filios Regis, et super omnes qui induti sunt vestitu extraneo.
9. In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit.	9. Et visitabo super omnem qui tripudiat super limen in die illo, qui replent domum dominorum suorum violentia et fraude.

The Prophet confirms here what he has previously taught, when he bids all *to be silent before God*; for this mode of speaking is the same as though he had said, that he did not terrify the Jews in vain, but seriously set before them God's judgment, which they would find by experience to be even more than terrible. He also records some of their sins, that the Jews might know that he did not threaten them for nothing, but that there were just causes why God declared that he would punish them. This is the substance of the whole.

Let us first see what the Prophet means by the word, silence. Something has been said of this on the second chapter of Habakkuk. We said then that by silence is meant submission; and to make the thing more clear, we said

that we were to notice the contrast between the silence to which men calmly submit, and the contumacy, which is ever clamorous: for when men seek to be wise of themselves, and acquiesce not in God's word, it is then said, that they are not silent, for they refuse to give a hearing to his word; and when men give loose reins to their own will, they observe no bounds. Until God then obtains authority in the world, all places are full of clamor, and the whole life of men is in a state of confusion, for they run to and fro in their wanderings; and there is no restraint where God is not heard. It is for the same reason that the Prophet now demands silence: but the expression is accommodated to the subject which he handles. To be silent at the presence of God, it is true, is to submit to God's authority; but the connection is to be considered; for Zephaniah saw then that God's judgment was despised and regarded as nothing; and he intimates here that God had so spoken, that the execution was nigh at hand. Hence he says, *Be silent*,^{f5} that is, Know ye, that I have not spoken merely for the purpose of terrifying you; but as God is prepared to execute vengeance, of this he now reminds you, that if there be any hope of repentance, ye may in time seek to return into favor with him; if not, that ye may be without excuse.

We now then understand why the Prophet bids them to be *silent before the Lord Jehovah*: and the context is a confirmation of the same view; for the reason is added, *Because the day of Jehovah is nigh*. For profane men ever promise to themselves some respite, and think that they gain much by delay: the Prophet, on the contrary, does now expose to scorn this self-security, and says, that the day of Jehovah was nigh at hand. It is then the same thing as though he had said, that his judgment ought to have been quickly anticipated, and even with fear and trembling.

He afterwards employs a metaphor to set forth what he taught, — that God had *prepared a sacrifice*, yea, that he had already *appointed* and *set apart his guests*. By the word, sacrifice, the Prophet reminded them, that the punishment of which he had spoken would be just, and that the glory of God would thereby shine forth. We indeed know how ready the world is to make complaints; when it is pressed by God's hand, it expostulates on account of too much rigor; and many in an open manner give utterance to their blasphemies. As then they own not God's justice in his punishment, the Prophet calls it a sacrifice; and sacrifices, we know, are evidences of divine worship, and he who offers a sacrifice to God, owns him to be just. So also by this kind of speaking Zephaniah intimates that

God would not act a cruel part in cutting off the city Jerusalem and its inhabitants; for this would be a sacrifice, according to the language often employed by the Prophets, and especially by Isaiah, who says of Bozrah, ‘A sacrifice is prepared in Bozrah,’ ^{<233406>} Isaiah 34:6;) and who says also of Jerusalem itself, ‘Oh! Ariel! Ariel!’ ^{<232901>} Isaiah 29:1. where Jerusalem itself is represented as the altar; as though he had said, In all the streets, in the open places, there shall be altars to me; for I will collect together great masses of men, whom I shall slay as a sacrifice to me. For all who were not willing to render worship to God, and who did not freely offer themselves as spiritual victims to him, were to be drawn to the slaughter, and were at the same time called sacrifices. So the executions on the gallows, when the wicked suffer, may be said to be sacrifices to God: for the Lord arms the magistrate with the sword to restrain wickedness, that the wicked may not have such liberty as to banish all equity from the world. The cities also, which, being forcibly taken, are subject to a slaughter, and the fields, where armies are slain, become altars, for God makes the rebellious a sacrifice, because they refuse willingly to offer themselves.

So also in this place the Prophet says, *Jehovah has prepared for himself a sacrifice*, — Where? At Jerusalem, through the whole city, as it has appeared from the quotation from Isaiah; for as they had not rightly sacrificed to God on Mount Sion, but vitiated his whole worship, God himself declares, that he would become a priest, that he might slay, as he thought right, those beasts, who had obstinately refused his yoke: *And he has prepared his guests*. But I cannot finish today.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we continue in so many ways to provoke against us thy wrath, we may patiently bear the punishment, by which thou wouldest correct our faults, and also anticipate thy judgment: and since thou art pleased to recall us in due time to thyself, let us not turn deaf ears to thy counsels, but so obey and submit ourselves to thee, that we may become partakers of that mercy, which thou offerest to us, provided we seek to be reconciled to thee, and so proceed in thy service, that under the government of Christ thy Son, whom thou hast appointed to be our supreme and only king, we may so strive to be wholly devoted to thee that thou mayest be glorified through our whole life, until

we become at length partakers of that celestial glory, which has
been procured for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. Amen

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTIETH

WE stated yesterday why God compares the slaughter of the wicked to a sacrifice, — because in punishing the ungodly, he shows himself to be the judge of the world: and this slaying is a sacrifice of sweet odour, because it makes known this glory. And he immediately adds, that he had *prepared his guests*. The word he uses is קדש, *kodash*, which means to sanctify, but is often to be taken in a different sense. It may be explained as meaning, that God had prepared his guests: but as there is an express mention made of sacrifice, Zephaniah, I have no doubt, continues the same metaphor. The meaning then is, that the Chaldeans, who were ministers of God's vengeance, were already not only chosen for the purpose of executing it, but were divinely consecrated for that end: and this unwelcome saying was uttered by the Prophet, that he might more sharply touch the feelings of his own nation. The Jews ought indeed to have acknowledged God's judgment even when executed by heathens; but this they would not have done, had they not understood, that these were, in exercising their cruelty, as it were, the priests of God; for the royal priesthood at Jerusalem had been profaned. We now then see why the Prophet says, that those were sanctified by the Lord who had been invited to feed on the flesh of the chosen people, as they were wont to eat of the remainder of their sacrifices on festal days.^{f6} Let us now proceed.

I yesterday repeated this verse, *And it shall be, on the day of the sacrifice of Jehovah, that I will then visit the princes, and the sons of the king, and those who are clothed with strange apparel*. The Prophet shows, that he not only threatened the common people, but also the chief leaders, so that he spared not even the king's sons. He attacks then here the principal men among the people; for they were justly led to punishment in the first place, as they had been to others the cause of their errors. We indeed know, that they who excel in dignity give a much greater offense when they abuse their power in promoting what is sinful. Hence it was, that God seemed often to have sent his Prophets to them only. For though the low and the humble in the community were not exempt from punishment, yet it was but reasonable that God should more severely punish their leaders. Hence the Prophet now says, that God would *visit the princes and the king's sons*.^{f7} He did not indeed intend here to flatter obscure men, as though

God meant to overlook them: but as the king and his counselors had more grievously sinned, the more angry was God with them. We also know, that kings and others, who exercise power, are not easily moved, for the splendor of their fortune blinds them; and they think that they are in a manner exempt from laws, because they occupy a higher station. We now then see why the Prophet speaks especially of the princes and the king's sons.

He also adds, *And those who wear foreign apparel.*¹⁸ Some refer this to the worshipers of Baal, or his priests; but the context does not allow us to apply it to any but to courtiers, whose great delight was in apparel: for what Christ says is proved by the experience of all ages to be too true, — that they who wear soft clothing are in king's courts. ^{<401108>} Matthew 11:8. And it is probable, that courtiers, through a foolish affectation, often changed their clothes; as it is the case with men who seek to appear great, they devise daily some new way for spending money; and though they may be more splendidly clothed than needful, yet they think it almost too sordid to wear the same apparel for a whole month; and that their prodigality may be more evident, they change also the forms of their dress. This affectation prevails far too much at this day in the world. But even then in the age of the Prophet, as it appears, the courtiers and those who had power among the people, often changed their dress, that they might the more display their pomp and attract the admiration of the simple and poor people. And it was not simple ambition, but it brought with it a contempt for others; for the rich in this way upbraided the poor, that they themselves were alone worthy of this superfluity and opulence. It was not enough for them, that they were clothed for their own comfort, and also that ornament and splendor were added; but they would have willingly made bare all others: and as it was a shame to do this, they yet showed, as far as they could, by their superfluous abundance, that they were alone worthy of such display. It was then no wonder that the Lord threatened them with so much severity.

As this vice in course of time had greatly increased, this passage of the Prophet deserves particular notice. And the more luxurious men become and the more they indulge in such varieties, and thus manifest their pride, the more carefully we ought to learn to restrain the desires of our flesh, that they may not leap over the bounds of moderation; and let those who abound in wealth be contented with what is modest and becoming; and let

them especially abstain from that absurd affectation, which the Prophet evidently condemns here. It may however have been, that the Jews then sought new and unusual fashions as to their clothes from remote countries, like the French at this day, who delight in the Turkish habit; for they have too much intercourse with Turkey. So also at that time a foolish desire had possessed the hearts of the people, so as to wish to ingratiate themselves with the Chaldeans, and to make friends of them by a likeness in dress. And we may learn this from a passage in Ezekiel, where he compares them to harlots or to foolish lovers ^{<262302>} Ezekiel 23:2, etc.): for as lovers paint harlots on walls, and whoremongers and adulterers do the same; so Ezekiel accuses the Jews, that they were so inflamed with a mad desire of making a covenant with the Chaldean nation, that they had their images painted in their chambers. They also no doubt imitated their dress, in order to show that they regarded it a great happiness, if they became their friends and confederates.

Now follows what I repeated also yesterday, *I will visit every one who danceth on the threshold*. Some explain this of the worshipers of Baal, but improperly; for as I have already said, the context will not allow us to understand this except of the servants of princes, who cruelly harassed the people and deprived helpless men of their property, who were not able to resist them. The Prophet then, after having spoken of the chief governors of the kingdom and of the king's sons, now comes to their servants, who, like hunting dogs, were ready to seize everywhere on the prey. They who understand this to be said of the sacrifices of Baal, adduce a passage from sacred history, — that since the image of Dagon had been found on the threshold of the temple, they dared not to tread on the threshold, but leaped over it: but this is too far-fetched. Others also bring expositions of a different kind; but the Prophet, I have no doubt, refers here to the liberty they took in plundering, when he says, that they danced on the threshold, as persons triumphing; for he afterwards adds, that they *filled, by rapine and fraud, the houses* of the princes. To leap or dance then on the threshold is no other thing than to take possession of the houses of other people, and insolently to triumph over them, as it is usually done by conquerors. For he who takes possession of what belongs to another, does not quietly rest there as in his own habitation, but boasts and exults. So also here, the Prophet paints to the life that wantonness, which the servants of princes showed, when they entered into the houses of others.

He therefore says, that *they danced*, and said, This is my house; and who will dare to say a word to the contrary? Since then the servants of princes took so much liberty, the Prophet here denounces on them the vengeance of God. ^{f9}

He then adds, that they filled their masters' houses by *rapine and fraud*. By rapine and fraud he means the prey gathered, partly by armed force, and partly by deceit and craft; for courtiers have their nets by which they lay in wait for helpless men. But if they cannot obtain by fraud what they hope for, they leave recourse to armed force. However this may be, they enrich themselves, sometimes by plundering, and sometimes by fraud. Hence the Prophet mentions both here. It follows —

<360110>ZEPHANIAH1:10	
10. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, <i>that there shall be</i> the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills.	10.Et erit in die illa, dicit Iehova, vox clamoris a porta piscium, et ululatus a secundda (<i>ad verbum; sed multi intelligunt scholam, et contritio magna a collibus.</i>)

He confirms here the same truth, and amplifies and illustrates it by a striking description; for we know how much a lively representation avails to touch the feelings, when the event itself is not only narrated, but placed as it were before our eyes. So the Prophet is not content with plain words, but presents a scene, that the future destruction of Jerusalem might appear in a clearer light. But as I have elsewhere explained this mode of speaking, I shall not dwell on the subject now.

He says, that there would be *the voice of crying from the gate of the fishes*. He names here three places in Jerusalem, and afterwards he adds a fourth. But as we do not understand the situation of the city, sufficient for us is this probable conjecture, — that he refers to parts opposite to one another; as though he had said, that no corner of the city would be in a quiet state, when the Lord roused up war. Let us then suppose it to be triangular, and let the gate of the fishes be one side, and let the second gate or the school be on the other; and let the part nigh the hills form the third side. What

some say, that the hills mean palaces, I do not approve of; nor is it consistent with the context: but we ought to bear in mind what I have already stated, that the Prophet here denounces ruin on every part of the city, so that the Jews would in vain seek refuges for themselves; for by running here and there, they would find all places full of crying and howling. *There shall be then the voice of crying from the gate of the fishes.* Why the Prophet calls it the gate of the fishes we cannot for certainty say, except that it is a probable conjecture, that either some fish-pond was near it, or that the fish-market was nigh.

As to the word מִשְׁנֵה, *meshene*, the majority of interpreters think that it means the place where the priests explained the law and devoted themselves to the study of it; and they adduce a passage from ^{<122214>}2 Kings 22:14, where it seems, as there is mention made of priests, the word is taken in this sense. But as gates are spoken of here, and as the Hebrews often call whatever is second in order by this word, as the second part in buildings and also in towns and in other places, is thus called, we may take it here in this sense, that is, as meaning that gate which was next to the first in general esteem. But as the subject has little to do with the main point, I dismiss it. ^{f10}

He says in the last place, that there *would be a great breach in the hills.* He refers, I have no doubt, to that part of the city which was contiguous to the mountains. However this may be, it was the Prophet's object to include here the whole city, that he might shake off from the Jews all vain confidence, and show that there would be no escape, when the Lord stretched forth his hand to punish their sins. It now follows —

<div><360111>ZEPHANIAH 1:11</div>	
11. Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off.	11. Ululate habitatores loci concavi; quia exterminatus est populos mercatorum, excisi sunt omnes onusti pecunia.

The Prophet addresses the merchants here who inhabited the middle part of the city, and hence thought themselves farther off from all danger and trouble. As then they were concealed as it were in their hiding-places, they

thought that no danger was nigh them; and thus security blinded them the more. After having spoken of the king's palace and of the princes and their servants, Zephaniah now turns his discourse to the merchants.

And he calls them the inhabitants of the hollow place, **מכתש**, *mecatesh*. The verb **כתש**, *catash*, means to be hollow; hence the Hebrews call a hollow place **מכתש**, *mecatesh*. So Solomon calls a mortar by this name, because it is hollow:^{f11} and we learn also from other parts of scripture that the word means sometimes either a cavern or some low place. But we know that merchants have for the most part their streets on level ground, and it is for their advantage, as they have goods to carry. It may then have been, that at Jerusalem there was a large company of merchants in that part of the city, which was in its situation low. But they who regard it as a proper name, bring nothing either of reason or probability to confirm their opinion: and it is also evident from the context that merchants are here addressed, *for cut off*, he says, *is the mercantile people*. The word **בנען**, *canon*, means a merchant. Some think that the Jews are here, as often elsewhere, called Canaan, because they were become degenerate, and more like the Canaanites than the holy fathers, from whom they descended.^{f12} But the Prophet speaks here no doubt of merchants, for an explanation immediately follows, *all who are laden with money*. And he says that merchants were laden with money, because they would not transact business without making payments and counting money, and also, because merchants for the most part engrossed by their gainful arts a great portion of the wealth of the world.

We now then understand what the Prophet means: He threatens howling to the merchants, who were concealed in their hidden places, for they occupied that part of the city, as I have already said, which was below the hills; and he then makes use of the word **בנען**, *canon*, a trafficker; and lastly he speaks of their wealth, as it is probable that they became rich through frauds and most dishonest means, and shows that their money would be useless to them, for they would find in it no defense, when the Lord extended his hand to punish them. It now follows —

<360112> ZEPHANIAH 1:12

12. And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil.

12. Et erit in tempore illo, serutabor Ierusalem in lucernis, et visitabo super homines, qui congelati sunt in faecibus suis, et dicunt in cordibus suis, Neque benefaciet Iehova, neque malefaciet.

The Prophet addresses here generally the despisers of God, who were become hardened in their wickedness. But before he openly names them, he says that the visitation would be such, that God would search every corner, so that no place would remain unexplored. For to visit with candles, or to search with candles, is so to examine all hidden places or coverts, that nothing may escape. When one intends to plunder a city, he first enters into the houses, and takes away whatever he finds; but when he thinks that there are some hidden treasures, he descends into the secret cells; and then if there be no light there, he lights a candle, and carefully looks here and there, that he may not overlook anything. By this comparison then God intimates, that Jerusalem would be so plundered, that nothing whatever would remain. Hence he says, *I will search it with candles*. We indeed know that nothing is hid from God; but it is evident, that he is constrained to borrow comparisons from the common practice of men, because he could not otherwise express what is necessary for us to know. The world indeed deal with God as men do with one another; for they think that he can be deceived by their craftiness. He therefore laughs to scorn this folly, and says, that he would have candles to search out whatever was concealed.

Now, as impiety had possessed the minds of almost all the people, he says, *I will visit the men, who on their lees are congealed*. This may indeed be only understood of the rich, who flattered themselves in their prosperity, and feared nothing, and were thus congealed on their lees: but Zephaniah shows in the words which follow, that he had in view something more atrocious, that is, that they said that *neither good nor evil proceeded from God*. At the same time, these two things may be suitably

joined together — that he reproves here their self-security, produced by wealth — and that he also accuses the careless Jews of that gross contempt of God which is afterwards mentioned. And I am disposed to take this view, that is, that the Jews, inebriated with prosperity, became hardened, as men contract hardness often by labor — and that they so collected lees through too much quietness and abundance of things, that they became wholly stupid, and could be touched by no truth made known to them. Hence in the first place the Prophet says, that God would visit with punishment a carelessness so extreme, when men not only slumbered in their prosperity, but also became congealed in their own stupidity, so as to be almost void of sense and understanding. When one addresses a dead mass, he can effect nothing: and so the Prophet compares careless men to a dead and congealed mass; for stupidity had so bound up all their senses, that they could not be either allured by the goodness of God, or terrified by his threatenings. Congealing then is nothing else but that hardness or contumacy, which is contracted by self-indulgences, and particularly when the minds of men become almost stupefied.^{f13} And by *lees* he means sinful indulgences, which so infatuate all the senses of men, that no light nor sincerity remains.

He then mentions what they said in their hearts. He expresses here what that carelessness which he condemned brings with it — even that wicked men fearlessly mock God. What it is to speak in the heart, is evident from many parts of Scripture; it means to determine anything within: for though the ungodly do not openly proclaim what they determine in their minds, they yet reason within themselves, and settle this point — that either there is no God, or that he rests idly in heaven. ‘Said has the ungodly in his heart, No God is.’ Why in the heart? Because shame or fear prevents men from openly avowing their impiety; yet they cherish such thoughts in the heart and assent to them. Now here is described by the Prophet the height of impiety, when he says, that men drunk with pleasures robbed God of his office as a judge, saying, that he does neither good nor evil. And it is probable that there were then many at Jerusalem and throughout Judea who thus insolently despised God as a judge. But Zephaniah especially speaks of the chief men; for such above all others deride God, as the giants did, and look down as from on high on his judgments. There is indeed much insensibility among the common people; but there is more madness in the

pride of great men, who, trusting in their power, think themselves exempt from the authority of God.

But what I have just said must be borne in mind, that an unhealable impiety is described by the Prophet, when he accuses the Jews, that they did not think God to be the author either of good or of evil; because God is thus deprived of his dignity; for except he is owned as the judge of the world, what becomes of his dignity? The majesty, or the authority, or the glory of God does not consist in some imaginary brightness, but in those works which so necessarily belong to him, that they cannot be separated from his very essence. It is what peculiarly belongs to God, to govern the world, and to exercise care over mankind, and also to make a difference between good and evil, to help the miserable, to punish all wickedness, to check injustice and violence. When any one takes away these things from God, he leaves him an idol only. Since, then, the glory of God consists in his justice, wisdom, judgment, power, and other attributes, all who deny God to be the governor of the world entirely extinguish, as much as they can, his glory. Even so do heathen writers accuse Epicures; for as he dared not to deny the existence of some god, like Diagoras and some others, he confessed that there are some gods, but shut them up in heaven, that they might enjoy there their leisure and delights. But this is to imagine a god, who is not a god. It is then no wonder that the Prophet condemns with so much sharpness the stupidity of the Jews, as they thought that neither good nor evil proceeded from God. But there was also a greater reason why God should be so indignant at such senselessness: for whence was it that men entertained such an opinion or such a delirious thought, as to deny that God did either good or evil, except that they attempted to drive God far away from them, that they might not be subject to his judgment. They therefore who seek to extinguish the distinction between right and wrong in their consciences, invent for themselves the delirious notion, that God concerns not himself with human affairs, that he is contented with his own celestial felicity, and descends not to us, and that adversity as well as prosperity happens to men by chance.

We hence see how men seek willfully and designedly to indulge the notion, that neither good nor evil comes from God: they do this, that they may stupefy their own consciences, and thus precipitate themselves with greater liberty into sin, as though they were free to do anything with

impunity, and as though there was no judge to whom an account is to be rendered.

And hence I have said, that it is the very summit of impiety when men strengthen themselves in this error, that God rests in heaven, and that whatever miseries they endure in this world happen through fortunes and that whatever good things they have are to be ascribed either to their own industry or to chance. And so the Prophet briefly shows in this passage that the Jews were past recovery, that no one might feel surprised, that God should punish with so much severity a people who had been his friends, and whom he had adopted in preference to the whole world: for he had set apart the race of Abraham, as it is well known, as his chosen and holy people. God's vengeance on the children of Abraham might have appeared cruel or extremely rigid, had it not been expressly declared that they had advanced so far in impiety as to seek to exclude God from the government of the world, and to deprive him of his own peculiar office, even that of punishing sin, of defending his own people, of delivering them from all evils, of relieving all their miseries. Since, then, they thus shut up God in heaven, and gave the governing power on earth to fortune, it was an intolerable stupidity, nay, wholly diabolical. It was therefore no wonder that God was so severely indignant, and stretched forth his hand to punish their sin, as their disease had become now incurable.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as almost the whole world breaks out into such excesses, that there is no moderation, no reason, — O grant, that we may learn not only to confine ourselves within those limits which thou dost approve and command, but also to delight and glory in the smallness of our portion, inasmuch as the wealth, and honors, and pleasures of the world so fascinate the hearts and minds of all, that they elevate themselves into heaven, and carry on war, as it were, avowedly with thee. Grant also to us, that in our limited portion we may be in such a way humbled under thy powerful hand, as never to doubt but that thou wilt be our deliverer even in our greatest miseries; and that ascribing to thee the power over life and death, we may feel fully assured, that whatever afflictions happen to us, proceed from thy just judgment, so that we may be led to repentance, and daily exercise ourselves in it,

until we shall at length come to that blessed rest which is laid up
for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIRST

<360113> **ZEPHANIAH 1:13**

13. Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof.

13. Et erit substantia eorum in direptionem, et domus eorum in vastitatem; et aedificabunt domos, neque habitabunt; et plantabunt vineas, neque bibent vinum earum.

ZEPHANIAH pursues the same subject — that God, after long forbearance, would punish his rebellious and obstinate people. Hence he says, that they were now delivered, even by God himself, into the hands of their enemies. They indeed knew that many were inimical to them; but they did not consider God’s judgment, as God himself elsewhere complains — that they did not regard the hand of him who smote them. <230913> Isaiah 9:13. Our Prophet, therefore, declares now that they were given up to destruction, and that their enemies would find no trouble nor difficulty in invading the land, since all places would be open to plunder. And he recites what is found in <032620> Leviticus 26:20; for the Prophets were interpreters of the law, and the only difference between Moses and them is, that they apply his general truth to their own time. The Prophet now pursues this course, as though he had said, that God had not in vain or to no purpose threatened this evil in his law; for the Jews would find by experience that this would really be the case, and that it had been truly said, that the fruit of the land, their habitations, and other comforts of life, would be transferred to others. It now follows —

14. The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.

14. Propinquus dies Jehovae magnus, propinquus et festinans valde; vox diei Jehovae amara (ut alii vertunt,) vociferabitur illic fortis (vel, amarum, aut, amare illic vociferabitur fortis; alii secus ditinguunt, Vox diei Jehovae amara vociferabitur, aut, amare; postea, illic fortis.)

The Prophet in this verse expresses more clearly what I have already stated — That God would be the author of all the evils which would happen to the Jews; for as they grew more insensible in their sins, they more and more provoked God's wrath against themselves. It is therefore no common wisdom to consider God's hand when he strikes or chastens us. This is the reason why the Prophet now calls the attention of the Jews to God, that they might not fix their minds, as it is commonly done, on men only. At the same time, he tries to shake off their torpor by declaring that the day would be terrible, and that it was also now near at hand. We indeed know that hypocrites trifle with God, except they feel the weight of his wrath, and that they protract time, and promise themselves so long a respite, that they never awake to repentance. Hence the Prophet in the first place shows, that whatever evils then impended over the Jews were not only from men, but especially from God. This is one thing; and then, in order thoroughly to touch stupid hearts, he says, that *the day would be terrible*; and lastly, that they might not deceive themselves by vain flatteries, he declares that the day was at hand. These three things must be noticed in order that we understand the Prophet's object.

But he says at the beginning of the verse, that *the great day of Jehovah was nigh*. In these words he includes the three things to which I have already referred. By calling it the *day of Jehovah*, he means, that whatever evils the Jews suffered, ought to have been ascribed to his judgment; and by calling it *the great day*, his object was to strike terror; as well as by saying, in the third place, that it was nigh. We hence see that three things are included in these words. But the Prophet more fully explains what might, on account of the brevity of his words, have seemed not quite clear.

Near, he says, *is the day, and quickly hastens*. Men, we know, are wont to extend time, that they may cherish their sins; for though they cannot divest themselves of every feeling as to religion, or shake it off, they yet imagine for themselves a long distance between them and God; and by such an imagination they find ease for themselves. Hence the Prophet declares *the day* to be *nigh*; and as it was hardly credible that the destruction of which he spake was near, he adds, that the day was *quickly hastening*; as though he had said, that they ought not to judge by the present state of things what God would do, for in a moment his wrath would pass through from east to west like lightning. Men need long preparation when they determine to execute their vengeance; but God has no need of much preparation, for his own power is sufficient for him when he resolves to destroy the wicked. We now, then, see why it was added by the Prophet, that the day would quickly hasten.

He now repeats that the *day of Jehovah* and *his voice would cry out bitterly*. I have stated three renderings as given by interpreters. Some read thus — The day of Jehovah shall be bitter; there the strong shall cry aloud. This meaning is admissible, and a useful instruction may from it be elicited; as though the Prophet had said, that no courage could bring help to men, or be an aid to them, against God's vengeance. Others give this rendering, that the day would bitterly cry out, for there would be the strong, that is, the strength of enemies would break down whatever courage the Jews might have. But this second meaning seems forced; and I am disposed to adopt the third — that the voice of the day of Jehovah would bitterly cry out. And he means the voice of those who would have really to know God as a judge, whom they had previously despised; for God would then put forth his power, which had been an object of contempt, until the Jews had by experience felt it.^{f14}

As to the Prophet's design, there is no ambiguity: for he seeks here to rouse the Jews from their insensibility, who had so hardened themselves against all threatening, that the Prophets were not able to convince them. Since, then, they had thus hardened themselves against every instruction and all warnings, the Prophet here says, that the voice of God's day would be different: for God's voice had sounded through the mouth of the Prophets, but it availed not with the deaf. An awful change is here announced; for the Jews shall then cry aloud, as the roaring of the divine voice shall then terrify them, when God shall really show that he is the

avenger of wickedness — When therefore he shall ascend his tribunal, then ye shall cry. His messengers now cry to you in vain, for ye close up your ears; ye shall cry in your turn, but it will be in vain.

But if one prefers to take it as one sentence, The voice of the day of Jehovah, there strong, shall bitterly cry out, the meaning will be the same as to the main point. I would not, therefore, contend about words, provided we bear in mind what I have already said — that Zephaniah sets here the cry of the distressed people in opposition to the voices of the Prophets, which they had despised, yea, and for the most part, as it appears from other places, treated with ridicule. However this may have been, he indirectly condemns their false confidence, when he speaks of the strong; as though he had said, that they were strong only for their own ruin, while they opposed God and his servants; for this strength falls at length, nay, it breaks itself by its own weight, when God rises to judgment. It follows —

<360115>ZEPHANIAH1:15, 16	
15. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,	15. Dies excaescentiae, dies ille, dies angustiae et afflictionis, dies tumultus, et vastationis, dies tumultus et vastationis, dies tenebrarum et caliginis, dies nubis et nebulae;
16. A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.	16. Dies tubae et clangoris super urbes munitas, et super arces excelsas.

The Prophet shows here how foolish they were who extenuated God’s vengeance, as hypocrites and all wicked men are wont to do. Hence he accuses the Jews of madness, that they thought that the way of reconciliation would be easy to them, when they had by their perverseness provoked God to come against them as an armed enemy. For though the ungodly do not promise to themselves anything of God’s favor, yet they entertain vain imaginations, as though he might with no trouble be pacified: they do not think that he will be propitious to them, and yet in the meantime they deride his vengeance. Against this kind of senselessness the

Prophet now inveighs. We have stated in other places, that these kinds of figurative expressions were intended solely for this end — to constrain men to entertain some fear, for they willfully deluded themselves: for the Prophets had to do, partly with open despisers of God, and partly with his masked worshipers, whose holiness was hypocrisy.

This, then, was the reason why he said, that that day would be a day of wrath, and also a *day of distress and of affliction,*^{f15} *of tumult and desolation,*^{f16} *of darkness and of thick darkness, of clouds and of mist.* In short, he intended to remove from the Jews that confidence with which they flattered themselves, yea, the confidence which they derived from their contempt of God: for the flesh is secure, while it has coverts, where it may withdraw itself from the presence of God. True confidence cannot exceed moderation, that is, the confidence that is founded on God's word, for thus men come nigh to God: but the flesh wishes for no other rest but in the forgetfulness of God. And we have already seen in the Prophet Amos, (<300518> Amos 5:18,) why the day of Jehovah is painted as being so dreadful; he had, as I have said, to contend with hypocrites, who made an improper use of God's name, and at the same time slumbered in gross insensibility. Hence Amos said, It will be a day, not of light, but of darkness; not of joy, but of sorrow. Why then do ye anxiously expect the day of the Lord? For the Jews, glorying in being the chosen people of God, and trusting only in their false title of adoption, thought that everything was lawful for them, as though God had renounced his own authority. And thus hypocrites ever flatter themselves, as though they held God bound to them. Our Prophet does not, as Amos, distinctly express these sentiments, yet the meaning of the words is the same, and that is, that when God ascends his tribunal, there is no hope for pardon. He at the same time cuts off from them all their vain confidences; for though God excludes all escapes, yet hypocrites look here and there, before and behind, to the right hand and to the left.

The Prophet therefore intimates, that there would be everywhere darkness and thick darkness, clouds and mists, affliction and distress, — Why? because it would be the day of wrath; for God, after having borne patiently a long time with the Jews, and seen that they perversely abused his patience, would at length put forth his power. And that they might not set up their own strongholds against God, he says, that war was proclaimed *against the fortified cities and high citadels.* We hence see that he deprives

the Jews of all help, in order that they might understand that they were to perish, except they repented, and thus return into favor with God. *It shall then be a day of the trumpet and of shouting,*^{f17} — How? *on all fortified cities.* For the Jews, as it is usually done, compared the strength of their enemies with their own. It was not their purpose to go forth beyond their own borders: and they thought that they would be able to resist, and be sufficiently fortified, if any foreign enemy invaded them. The Prophet laughs to scorn this notion, for God had declared war against their fortified cities. It follows —

<360117>ZEPHANIAH1:17	
17. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.	17. Et coarctabo hominem (vel, homines,) et ambulabunt tanquam caeci, quia contra Iehovam impie egerunt; et fundetur sanguis quasi pulvis; et caro eorum erit tanquam stercora.

He confirms what I have already stated — that though other enemies, the Assyrians or Chaldeans, attacked the Jews, yet God would be the principal leader of the war. God then claims here for himself what the Jews transferred to their earthly enemies: and the Prophet has already often called it the day of Jehovah; for God would then make known his power, which had been a sport to them. He therefore declares in this place, that he would *reduce man to distress*, so that the whole nation would *walk like the blind* — that, being void of counsel, they would stumble and fall, and not be able to proceed in their course: for they are said to go astray like the blind, who see no end to their evils, who find no means to escape ruin, but are held as it were fast bound. And we must ever bear in mind what I have already said — that the Jews were inflated with such pride, that they heedlessly despised all the Prophets. Since then they were thus wise in themselves, God denounces blindness on them.

He subjoins the reason, *Because they had acted impiously towards Jehovah.*^{f18} By these words he confirms what I have already explained — that the intermediate causes are not to be considered, though the Chaldeans took vengeance on the Jews; for there is a higher principle, and another

cause of this evil, even the contempt of God and of his celestial truth; for they had acted impiously towards God. And by these words the Prophet reminds the Jews, that no alleviation was to be expected, as they had not only men hostile to them, but God himself, whom they had extremely provoked.

Hence he adds, *Poured forth shall be your blood as dust.*^{f19} They whom God delivered up to extreme reproach were deserving of this, because he had been despised by them. *Their flesh,*^{f20} he says, *shall be as dung.* Now, we know how much the Jews boasted of their preeminence; and God had certainly given them occasion to boast, had they made a right and legitimate use of his benefits; but as they had despised him, they deserved in their turn to be exposed to every ignominy and reproach. Hence the Prophet here lays prostrate all their false boastings by which they were inflated; for they wished to be honorable, while God was despised by them. At last he adds —

<360118>ZEPHANIAH 1:18	
18. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD’S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.	18. Etiam argentum eorum, etiam aurum eorum, nihil proficiet ad liberandos ipsos in die excandescentie Jehovae, et in igne indignationis ejus evorabitur omnis terra; quia consumptionem et quidem definitam (vel, horribilem, vel, celerem) facit cum omnibus incolis terrae.

He repeats what he has already said — that the helps which the Jews hoped would be in readiness to prevent God’s vengeance would be vain. For though men dare not openly to resist God, yet they hope by some winding courses to find out some way by which they may avert his judgment. As then the Jews, trusting in their wealth, and in their fortified cities, became insolent towards God, the Prophet here declares, that neither *gold nor silver* should be a help to them. Let them, he says, accumulate wealth; though by the mass of their gold and silver they form high mountains for themselves, yet they shall not be able to turn aside the hand

of God, nor be able to deliver themselves, — and why? He repeats again the same thing, that it would be *the day of wrath*. We indeed know, that the most savage enemies are sometimes pacified by money, for avarice mitigates their cruelty; but the Prophet declares here, that as God would be the ruler in that war, there would be no redemption, and therefore money would be useless: for God could by no means receive them into favor, except they repented and truly humbled themselves before him.

He therefore adds, that the land would be *devoured by the fire of God's jealousy*, or indignation. He compares God's wrath to fire; for no agreement can be made when fire rages, but the more materials there are the more will there be to increase the fire. So then the Prophet excludes the Jews from any hope of deliverance, except they reconciled themselves to God by true and sincere repentance; *for a consummation*, he says, *he will make as to all the inhabitants of the land, and one indeed very quick* or speedy.^{f21} In short, he means, that as the Jews had hardened themselves against every instruction, they would find God's vengeance to be such as would wholly consume them, as they would not anticipate it, but on the contrary enhance it by their pride and stupidity, and even deride it. Now follows —

CHAPTER 2

<360201> ZEPHANIAH 2:1, 2

1. Gather yourselves together, yea,
gather together, O nation not desired;

1. Colligite vos, et colligite gens
non amabilis;

2. Before the decree bring forth,
before the day pass as the chaff,
before the fierce anger of the LORD
come upon you, before the day of the
LORD's anger come upon you.

2. Antequam pariat decretum,
sicut stipula transibit die,
antequam veniat super eos furor
irae Iehovae, antequam veniat
super eos dies irae Iehovae.

THE Prophet, after having spoken of God's wrath, and shown how terrible it would be, and also how near, now exhorts the Jews to repentance, and thus mitigates the severity of his former doctrine, provided their minds were teachable. We hence learn that God fulminates in his word against men, that he may withhold his hand from them. The more severe, then, God is, when he chastises us and makes known our sins, and sets before us his wrath, the more clearly he testifies how precious and dear to him is our salvation; for when he sees us rushing headlong, as it were, into ruin, he calls us back by threatening and chastisements. Whenever, then, God condemns us by his word, let us know that he will be propitious to us, if, touched with true repentance, we flee to his mercy; for to effect this is the design of all his reproofs and threatening.

There follows then a seasonable exhortation, after the Prophet had spoken of the dreadfulfulness of God's vengeance. *Gather yourselves*, he says, *gather, ye nation not worthy of being loved*. Others read — Search among yourselves, search; and interpreters differ as to the root of the verb; some derive it from קשש, *koshesh*, and others from קוש, *kush*; while some deduce the verb from the noun קש *kosh*, which signifies chaff or stubble. But however this may be, I consider the real meaning of the Prophet to be — Gather yourselves, gather; for this is what grammatical construction requires. I do not see why they who read search yourselves, depart from the commonly received meaning, except they think that the verb gather does not suit the context; but it suits it exceedingly well. Others with more

refinement read thus — Gather the chaff, gather the chaff, as though the Prophet ridiculed the empty confidence of the people. But as I have already said, he no doubt shows here the remedy, by which they might have anticipated God's judgment, with which he had threatened them. He indeed compares them to stubble, as we find in the next verse, but he shows that still time is given them to repent, so that they might gather themselves, and not be dissipated; as though he said — The day of your scattering is at hand; ye shall then vanish away like chaff, for ye shall not be able to stand at the breath of the Lord's wrath. But now while God withholds himself, and does not put forth his hand to destroy you, gather yourselves, that ye may not be like the chaff. There are then two parts in this passage; the first is, that if the Jews abused, as usual, the forbearance of God, they would become like the chaff, for God's wrath would in a moment scatter them; but the Prophet in the meantime reminds them that a seasonable time for repentance was still given them; for if they willingly gathered themselves, God would spare them. *Before then the day of Jehovah's wrath shall come; gather, he says, yourselves.*^{f22}

But the way of gathering is, when men do not vanish away in their foolish confidences, or when they do not indulge their own lusts; for whenever men give loose reins to wicked licentiousness, and thus go astray in gratifying their corrupt lusts, or when they seek here and there vain confidences, they expose themselves to a scattering. Hence the Prophet exhorts them to examine themselves, to gather themselves, and as it were to draw themselves together, that they might not be like the chaff. Hence he says, — gather yourselves, yea, gather, *ye nation not loved*.

Some take the participle נכספ, *necasaph*, in an active sense, as though the Prophet had said that the Jews were void of every feeling, and had become wholly hardened in their stupidity. But I know not whether this can be grammatically allowed. I therefore follow what has been more approved. The nation is called not worthy of love, because it did not deserve mercy; and God thus amplifies and renders illustrious his own grace, because he was still solicitous about the salvation of those who had willfully destroyed themselves, and rejected his favor. Though then the Jews had by their depravity so alienated themselves from God, that there was no reason why he should save them, he yet still continued to call them back to himself. It is therefore a remarkable proof of the unfailing grace of God,

when he shows love to a nation wholly worthy of being hated, and is concerned for its safety. ^{f23}

He then adds, *Before the decree brings forth*. Here the Prophet asserts his own authority, and that of God's other servants: for the Jews thought that all threatening would come to nothing, as it is the case with most men at this day who deride every true doctrine, as though it were nothing but an empty sound. Hence the Prophet ascribes birth to his doctrine. It is indeed true, that the word decree has a wider meaning; but the Prophet does not speak here of the hidden counsel of God. He therefore calls that a decree, which God had already declared by his servants: and the meaning is, that it is not beating the air when God denounces his vengeance on sinners by his Prophets, but that it is a fixed and unchangeable decree, which shall at length be effected. But the similitude of birth is most apposite; for as the embryo lies hid in the womb, and then emerges in due time into light; so God's vengeance, though hid for a time, will yet in due season be accomplished, when God sees that men's wickedness is past a remedy. We now understand why the Prophet says, that the time was near when the decree should bring forth.

Then he says, *Pass away shall the chaff in a day*. Some read, Before the day comes, when the stubble (or chaff) shall pass away. But I take יוֹם, *ium*, in another sense, as meaning that the Jews shall quickly pass away as the chaff; the like expression we have also met in Hosea. He says then that the Jews would perish in a day, in a short time, and as it were in a moment; though they thought that they would not be for a long time conquered. *Pass away*, he says, *shall they like chaff*. ^{f24}

Then he adds, *Before it comes, the fury of Jehovah's wrath; the day of Jehovah's wrath*, gather ye yourselves. He says first, before it comes upon you, the fury of wrath, and then, the day of wrath. He repeats the same thing; but some of the words are changed, for instead of the fury of wrath, he puts in the second clause, the day of wrath; as though he had said, that they were greatly deceived if they thought that they could escape, because the Lord deferred his vengeance. How so? For the day, which was nigh, though not yet arrived, would at length come. As when one trusting in the darkness of the night, and thinking himself safe from the danger of being taken, is mistaken, for suddenly the sun rises and discovers his hiding-place; so the Prophet intimates, that though God was now still, it would

yet be no advantage to the Jews: for he knew the suitable time. Though then he restrained for a time his wrath, he yet poured it forth suddenly, when the day came and the iniquity of men had become ripe.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we continue in various ways to provoke thy wrath, we may at length be awakened by the blasting of that trumpet which sounds in our ears, when thou proclaimest that thou wilt be the judge of the world, and testifies also the same so plainly in the gospel, so that we may, with our minds raised up to thee, learn to renounce all the depraved lusts of the world, and that having shaken off our torpidity, we may so hasten to repent, that we may anticipate thy judgment, and so find that we are reconciled to thee, as to enjoy thy goodness, and ever to retain the taste of it, in order that we may be enabled to renounce all the allurements and pleasures of this world, until we shall at length come to that blessed rest, where we shall be filled with that unspeakable joy, which thou hast promised to us, and which we hope for in Christ our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SECOND

<360203> ZEPHANIAH 2:3

3. Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, Which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger.

3. Quaerite Jehovahm omnes mansueti terrae, qui judicium ejus fecerunt (*pro fecistis*;) quaerite justitiam, quaerite mansuetudinem, si forte abscondamini in die irae Jehovae.

HERE the Prophet turns his discourse to a small number, for he saw that he could produce no effect on the promiscuous multitude. For had his doctrine been addressed in common to the whole people, there were very few who would have attended. We would therefore have been discouraged had he not believed that some seed remained among the people, and that the office of teaching and exhorting had not been in vain committed to him by God. But he shows at the same time that the greater part were wholly given up to destruction. We now see why the Prophet especially addresses the *meek of the land*; for few undertook the yoke, though they had been already broken down by many calamities. And it hence appears that the fruit of correction was not found equal in all, for God had chastised the good and the bad, the whole people, from the least to the greatest; they had all been laid prostrate by many evils, yet the same ferocity remained, as God complains in Isaiah, that he labored in vain in punishing that refractory nation. <230105> Isaiah 1:5.

But we are here taught that though ministers of the word may think that they spend their labor to no purpose, while they sing to the deaf, as the proverb is, they ought not yet to depart from the course of their vocation; for there will ever be some who will really show, after a long time, that they had been divinely and wonderfully saved, so as not to perish with others. But what the Prophet had especially in view was to show, that the faithful ought not to regard what the multitude may do, or how they live; but that when God invites them to repentance, and gives them a hope of pardon, they ought without delay to come to him, that they might not

perish with the rest. And it deserves to be noticed, that when God raises his voice, some harden others, and thus men lead one another into ruin. Thus it happens that all teaching becomes unsuccessful. Hence the Prophet applies a remedy, by showing how preposterous it is when some follow others; for in this way they increase the ranks of the rebellious; but that if there be any who are meek, they ought to be teachable, when God stretches forth his hand and shows that he will be propitious, provided they return to the right way.

He calls them meek who had profited under the scourges of God; for the Hebrews consider עֲנוּיִם, *onuim*, to be the afflicted, deriving the word from עָנָה, *one*, to afflict, or to be humble. But as men for the most part are not subdued except by scourges, they call, by a metaphor, עֲנוּיִם, *onuim*, the meek, such as have been subdued: for men grow wanton in their pleasures, and abundance commonly produces insolence; but by adversity they learn to become meek. Hence our Prophet calls those the meek of the land who were submissive to God, after having been chastised by him. For we know, that though God may smite the wicked, they yet continue to have a stiff and iron neck and a brazen front: but the faithful are tamed, as Jeremiah confesses as to himself; for he says that he was like an untamed heifer before he was chastised by God's scourges. So the Prophet directs his discourse to the few who had felt the afflicting hand of God, and had been thus humbled.^{f25}

He bids them to *seek Jehovah*, and yet he says that they had *wrought his judgment*. These two clauses seem inconsistent with each other; for if they had been previously alienated from God, justly might the Prophet bid them to return to the right way; but as they had devoted themselves to religion, and formed their life according to the rule of uprightness, the Prophet seems to have exhorted them without reason to seek God. But the passage is worthy of special notice; for we hence learn that even the best are roused by God's scourges to seek true religion with greater ardor than they had before done. Though then it be our object to serve God and to follow his word, yet when calamities arise and God appears as a judge, we ought to be stimulated to greater care and diligence; for it never is the case that any one of us fully performs his duty. Let us then remember, that we are roused by God whenever adversity impends over us, and when God himself shows by manifest signs that he is displeased. This is the reason

why the Prophet bids the pious doers of righteousness to seek God, however much they were before devoted to what was just and upright.

There was also another reason: we know how grievously faith is tried, when the good and wicked are indiscriminately and without any difference chastised by God's hand; for the godly are then tempted to think that it avails them nothing that they have labored sincerely to serve God; they think that this has all been in vain and to no purpose, for they are brought into the same miseries with others. As then this temptation is enough to shake even the strongest, the Prophet here exhorts the faithful to persevere, as though he had said, that in the first confusion no difference would be found between the good and the wicked as to their circumstances, for God would afflict both alike, but that the end would be different; and that there was therefore no reason for them to despond or to think it of no advantage to seek God: for he would at length really show that he approved of their integrity; as though he had said, God will not remunerate you at the first moment; but your patience will at length find that he is a just judge, who has regard for his people, and delivers them in their extremity.

To do the judgment of God in this place is to form the life according to the righteousness of the law. The word **משפּת**, *meshepheth*, has various meanings in Scripture. Sometimes, and indeed often, it designates the punishment which God allots to the wicked: but it frequently means equity or the rule of right living. Hence to do judgment is to observe what is righteous and just, to abstain from what is wrong and injurious. But the Prophet calls it the judgment of God, because it is what he prescribes in his word and what he approves. For we know that men blend various things, by which they would prove themselves to be just and righteous: but they deceive themselves, except they form their life especially according to what God requires. We now perceive what the Prophet means; and he afterwards defines what it is to seek God; for the latter part of the verse is added as an explanation, that the faithful might understand how God is to be sought.

For hypocrites, as soon as God invites them, accumulate many rites, and weary themselves much in things of no value. In short, they think that they have sufficiently sought God when they have performed a number of ceremonies. But by over-acting they trifle as it were with God, and thus

deceive themselves. Thus we see repentance profaned. They under the Papacy prattle enough about repentance, but when they are asked to define it, they begin with contrition; and yet no displeasure at sin is mentioned by them, nor any real love of righteousness, but they talk about attrition and contrition, and then immediately they leap to confession; and this is the principal part of repentance: they afterwards come to satisfactions. Thus repentance among the Papists is nothing else but a some kind of mistaken solicitude, by which they labor to pacify God, as though they came nigh him: nay, the satisfactions of the Papacy are nothing else but obstructions between God and men.

This evil has been common in all ages. The Prophet, therefore, does not without reason define what the true and rightful way of seeking God is, and that is, when *righteousness* is sought, when *humility* is sought. By righteousness he understands the same thing as by judgment; as though he had said, Advance in a righteous and holy course of life, for God will not forget your obedience, provided your hearts grow not faint, and ye persevere to the end. We hence see that God complains, not only when we obtrude external pomps and devices I know not what, as though he might like a child be amused by us; but also when we do not sincerely devote our life to his service. And he adds humility to righteousness; for it is difficult even for the very best of men not to murmur against God when he severely chastises them. We indeed find how much their own delicacy embitters the minds of men when God appears somewhat severe with them. Hence the Prophet, in order to check all clamors, exhorts the faithful here to cultivate humility, so that they might patiently bear the rigor by which God would try them, and might suffer themselves to be ruled by his hand. Peter had the same thing in view when he said, Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. (<600506> 1 Peter 5:6.) We now then see why the Prophet requires from the faithful not only righteousness but also humility; it was, that they might with composed minds wait for the deliverance which God had promised. They were not in the interval to murmur, nor to give vent to their own perverse feelings, however severely God might treat them.

We may hence gather a profitable instruction: The Prophet does not address here men who were depraved and had wholly neglected what was just and right, but he directs his discourse to the best, the most upright, the most holy: and yet he shows that they had no other remedy, but humbly and patiently to bear the chastisement of God. It then follows that no

perfection can be found among men, such as can meet the judgment of God. For were any to object and say, that they devoted themselves to righteousness, there is yet a just reason why they should humble themselves; for we are all guilty before God, and no one can clear himself, inasmuch as when any one examines his own conscience, he finds that he is not free from sin. However conscious then we may be of acting uprightly, and God himself may be a judge to us, and the Holy Spirit the witness of our true and real integrity; yet when the Lord summons us before his tribunal, let us all, from the least to the greatest, learn to confess ourselves guilty and exposed to judgment.

He afterwards adds, *If it may be* (or, *it may be*) *ye shall be concealed*^{f26} *in the day of Jehovah's anger*. The Prophet speaks not doubtingly, as though the faithful were uncertain as to God's favor: but he had another thing in view, — that though no hope remained as to the perceptions of men, yet the faithful would not lose their labor, if they sought God; for in their worst circumstances they would find him propitious to them and their safety secured by his kindness. Hence we see, that the Prophet in these words points out the disastrous character of the event, but no deficiency in the love of God. Though the Lord is ready to pardon, nay, of his own self anticipates his people, and kindly invites them to himself; it is yet necessary for them to consider how wonderful is his power in preserving his elect, when all things seem desperate. *It may then be*, he says, when the Jews understood that all things were in a state of extreme despair: and the Prophet said this, partly that the reprobate and the perverse might know that they were to perish, and partly that the faithful might appreciate the more the favor of God, when they saw themselves delivered from death by a miracle, and found that it would be a kind of resurrection, when God became their deliverer. Hence the Prophet, in order to commend to God's children his salvation, which he offers them, and to render more illustrious God's favor, makes use of the particle **אולי**, *auli*, it may be. In the meantime he fulminates, as I have already said, against the reprobate, that they might understand that it was all over with them. It follows —

<360204> ZEPHANIAH 2:4, 5

4. For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up.

4. Quia Aza derelicta erit, et Aksalon in vastiationem; Asdod in meridie expellent, et Ekron dissipabitur.

5. Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the LORD is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant.

5. Heus habitatores funiculi maris (vel, regionis) gens Cretim; sermo Iehovae contra vos Canaan, terra Philistim; et exterminabo te, ne sit habitator.

The Prophet begins here to console the elect; for when God's vengeance had passed away, which would only be for a time against them, the heathens and foreigners would find God in their turn to be their judge to punish them for the wrongs done to his people; though some think that God's judgment on the Jews is here described, while yet the Prophet expressly mentions their neighbors: but the former view seems to me more suitable, — that the Prophet reminds the faithful of & future change of things, for God would not perpetually afflict his chosen people, but would transfer his vengeance to other nations. The meaning then is — that God, who has hitherto threatened the Jews, would nevertheless be propitious to them, not indeed to all the people, for a great part was doomed to destruction, but to the remnant, whom the Lord had chosen as a seed to himself, that there might be some church remaining. For we know, that God had always so moderated the punishment he inflicted on his people, as not to render void his covenant, nor abolish the memory of Abraham's race: for this reason he was to come forth as their Redeemer.

Since then the Prophet speaks here against Gaza, and Ashkelon, and Ashdod, and Akron, and the Philistine, and the Cretians and others, he intended no doubt to add courage to the faithful, that they might not despair of God's mercy, though they might find themselves very grievously oppressed; for he could at length put an end to his wrath, after having purged his Church of its dregs. And this admonition the faithful also need, that they may not envy the wicked and the despisers of God, as though their condition were better or more desirable. For when the Lord

spares the wicked and chastens us, we are tempted to think that nothing is better than to shake off every yoke. Lest then this temptation should have assailed the faithful, the Prophet reminded them in time, that there was no reason why the heathens should flatter or congratulate themselves, when God did not immediately punish them; for their portion was prepared for them.

He mentions Gaza first, a name which often occurs in scripture. The Hebrews called it Aza; but as א, *oin*, is the first letter, the Greeks have rendered it Gaza, and heathen authors have thought it to be a Persia word, and it means in that language a treasure. But this is a vain notion, for it is no doubt a Hebrew word. He then adds Ashkelon, a city nigh to Gaza. In the third place he mentions Ashdod, which the Greeks have translated Azotus, and the Latins have followed the Greeks. He names Ekron in the last place. All these cities were near to the Jews, and were not far from one another towards the Moabites and the Idumeans. ^{f27}

He then adds, *Ho!* (or, *woe to*, הוּ) *the inhabitants of the line of the sea*. The region of the sea he calls Galilee; and he joins the Kerethites and the Philistine. Some think that he alludes to the troops, who carried on war under David; for he had chosen his garrison soldiers from that nation, that is, from the people of Galilee, and had called them Kerethites and Philistine. But I know not whether the Prophet spoke so refinedly. I rather think, that he refers here to those heathen nations, which had been hostile to the Jews, though vicinity ought to have been a bond of kindness. Hence he includes them all in the name of Canaan: for I do not take it here, as some do, as signifying merchants; for the Prophet evidently means, that however called, they were all Canaanites, who had been long ago doomed to destruction. Since then those regions had been enemies to the Jews, the Prophet intimates that God would become the defender of his chosen people.

The word of Jehovah is against you. God, who has hitherto threatened his own people, summons you to judgment. Think not that you will escape unpunished for having vexed his Church. For though God designed to prove the patience of his people, yet neither the Moabites, nor the rest, were excusable when they cruelly oppressed the Jews; yea, when they purposed through them to fight with God himself, the creator of heaven and earth. He afterwards adds, *There shall be no inhabitant*, for God would

destroy them all. We now see that the Prophet had no other design but to alleviate the bitter grief of the faithful by this consolation, — that their miseries would be only for a time, and that God would ere long punish their enemies. It follows —

<360206>ZEPHANIAH2:6, 7	
6. And the sea coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.	6. Et erit funiculus maris (id est, regio; sed metaphorice Hebraei vocant regionem, funiculum, propter distributionem) habitaculum caulis pastorum et septa ovium.
7. And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.	7. Et erit regio reliquiis domus Jehudah, apud eos pascentur, in domibus Ascalon vesperi accubabunt; quia visitabit Jehova Deus ipsorum ipsos, et reducet captivitatem eorum.

The Prophet confirms what he has before said respecting the future vengeance of God, which was now nigh at hand to the Moabites and other neighboring nations, who had been continually harassing the miserable Jews. Hence, he says, that that whole region would become the habitation of sheep. It is a well known event, that when any country is without inhabitants shepherds occupy it; for there is no sowing nor reaping there, but grass alone grows. Where, therefore, there is no cultivation, where no number of men are found, there shepherds find a place for their flocks, there they build sheep cots. It is, therefore, the same as though the Prophet had said, that the country would be desolate, as we find it expressed in the next verse.^{f28}

He immediately adds, but for a different reason, that *the coast of the sea would be a habitation to the house of Judah*. And there is here a striking divergence from the flocks of shepherds to the tribe of Judah, which was as it were, the chosen flock of God. The Prophet then, after having said that the region would be waste and desolate, immediately adds, that it would be

for the benefit of the chosen people; for the Lord would grant there to the Jews a safe and secure rest. But the Prophet confines this to the remnant; for the greater part, as we have already seen, were become so irreclaimable, that the gate of mercy was completely closed against them. The Prophet, at the same time, by mentioning a remnant, shows that there would always be some seed from which God would raise up a new Church; and he also encourages the faithful to entertain hope, so that their own small number might not terrify them; for when they considered themselves and found themselves surpassed by a vast multitude, they might have thought that they were of no account. Lest then they should be disheartened the Prophet says that this remnant would be the object of God's care; for when he would visit the whole coast of the sea and other regions, he would provide there for the Jews a safe habitation and refuge.

That line then, he says, *shall be for the residue of the house of Judah; feed shall they in Ashkelon, and there shall they lie down in the evening*; that is, they shall find in their exile some resting-place; for we know that the Jews were not all removed to distant lands; and they who may have been hid in neighboring places were afterwards more easily gathered, when a liberty to return was permitted them. This is what the Prophet means now, when he says, that there would be a refuge in the night to the Jews among the Moabites and other neighboring nations.

A reason follows, which confirms what I have stated, *for Jehovah their God*, he says, will visit them. We hence see that the Prophet mitigates here the sorrow of exile and of that most grievous calamity which was nigh the Jews, by promising to them a new visitation of God; as though he had said, Though the Lord seems now to rage against you, and seems to forget his own covenant, yet he will again remember his mercy, when the suitable time shall come. And he adds, *he will restore their captivity*; and he added this, that he might show that his favor would prove victorious against all hindrances. The Jews might indeed have raised this objection, Why does not the Lord help us immediately; but he, on the contrary, allows our enemies to remove us into exile? The Prophet here calls upon them to exercise patience; and yet he promises, that after having been driven into exile, they should again return to their country; for the Lord would not suffer that exile to be perpetual. It now follows —

<360208> ZEPHANIAH 2:8

8. I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border.

8. Audivi opprobrium Moab, et contumelias filiorum Ammon, quibus exprobrarunt populo meo, et se extulerunt contra terminum ipsorum.

The Prophet confirms what I have just said of God's vengeance against foreign enemies. Though all the neighboring nations had been eager in their hostility to the Jews, yet we know that more hatred, yea and more fury, had been exhibited by these two nations than by any other, that is, by the Moabites and the Ammonites, notwithstanding their connection with them by blood, for they derived their origin from Lot, who was Abraham's nephew. Though, then, that connection ought to have turned the Moabites and the Ammonites to mercy, we yet know they always infested the Jews with greater fury than others, and as it were with savage cruelty. This is the reason why the Prophet speaks now especially of them. Some indeed take this sentence as spoken by the faithful; but the context requires it to be ascribed to God, and no doubt he reminds them that he looked down from on high on the proud vauntings of Moab which he scattered in the air, as though he had declared that it was not hidden or unknown to him how cruelly the Moabites and Ammonites raged against the Jews, how proud and inhuman they had been. And this was a very seasonable consolation. For the Jews might have been swallowed up with despair, had not this promise been made to them. They saw the Moabites and the Ammonites burning with fury, when yet they had not been injured or provoked. They also saw that they made gain and derived advantage from the calamities of a miserable people. What could the faithful think? These wicked men not only harassed them with impunity, but their cruelty and perfidy towards them was gainful. Where was God now? If he regarded his own Church, would he not have interposed? Lest then a temptation of this kind should upset the faithful, the Prophet introduces God here as the speaker, —

I have heard, he says, *the reproach of Moab; I have heard the revilings of Amman*: “Nothing escapes me; though I do not immediately show that these things are regarded by me, yet I know and observe how shamefully the Moabites and the Ammonites have persecuted you: they at length shall

find that I am the guardian of your safety, and that you are under my protection.” We now apprehend the Prophet’s design. Nearly the same words are used by Isaiah, ^{<231601>} Isaiah 16:1, and also by Jeremiah ^{<244801>} Jeremiah 48:1, they both pursue the subject much farther, while our Prophet only touches on it briefly, for we see that what he says is comprised in very few words. But by saying that the reproach of Moab and the revilings of the children of Amman had come into remembrance before God, what he had in view was — that the Jews might be assured and fully persuaded that they were not rejected and forsaken, though for a time they were reproachfully treated by the wicked. The Prophet indeed takes the words reproach and revilings, in an active sense. ^{f29}

He then adds, *By which they have upbraided any people*. God intimates here that he does not depart from his elect when the wicked spit, as it were, in their faces. There is indeed nothing which so much wounds the feelings of ingenuous minds as reproach; there is not so much bitterness in hundred deaths as in one reproach, especially when the wicked licentiously triumph, and do this with the applauding consent of the whole world; for then all difference between good and evil is confounded, and good conscience is as it were buried. But the Prophet shows here, that the people of God suffer no loss when they are thus unworthily harassed by the wicked and exposed to their reproach.

He at last subjoins that they had *enlarged over their border*. Some consider mouth to be understood — they have enlarged the mouth against their border; and the word, it is true, without any addition, is often taken in this sense; but in this place the construction is fuller, for the words **על-גבולם**, *ol-gebulam*, over their border, follow the verb. The Prophet means that God’s wrath had been provoked by the petulance of both nations, for they wished to break up, as it were, the borders, which had been fixed by God. The land of Canaan, we know, had been given to the Jews by an hereditary right; — When the Most High, says Moses, divided the nations, he set a line for Jacob. ^{<053208>} Deuteronomy 32:8. It is indeed true that the possessions of the nations were allotted to them by the hidden counsel of God; but there was a special reason as to his chosen people; for the Lord had made Abraham the true possessor of that land, even for ever. ^{<011708>} Genesis 17:8. Now the Moabites were confined, as it were, to a certain place; the Lord had assigned to them their own inheritance. When, therefore, they sought to go beyond and to invade the

land of the Jews, God's wrath must have been kindled against them; for they thus fought, not against mortals, but against God himself; for by removing the borders fixed by him, they attempted to subvert his eternal decree. We now then understand why the Prophet says that the children of Moab and of Ammon had enlarged over the border of those who had been placed in the land of Canaan by God's hand; for they not only sought to eject their neighbors, but wished and tried to take away from God's hand that inheritance which the Lord had given to Abraham, and given, as I have said, in perpetuity.^{f30}

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast been pleased to consecrate us a peculiar people to thyself, we may be mindful of such an invaluable favor, and devote ourselves wholly to thee, and so labor to cultivate true sincerity as to bear the marks of thy people and of thy holy Church: and as we are so polluted by so many of the defilements of our own flesh and of this world, grant that thy Holy Spirit may cleanse us more and more every day, until thou bringest us at length to that perfection to which thou invites us by the voice of thy gospel, that we may also enjoy that blessed glory which has been provided for us by the blood of thy only begotten Son. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THIRD.

<360209>ZEPHANIAH2:9, 10	
9. Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.	9. Propterea vivo ego, dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, quod Moab sicuti Sodoma erit, et filii Ammon sicuti Gomorrha, productio urticae et fodina salis, et vastitas in perpetuum: reliquiae populi mei diripient eos, et residuum gentis meae possidebit eos.
10. This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the LORD of hosts.	10. Hoc illis pro superbis sua, quia exprobrarunt et insultarunt super populum Jehovae exercituum.

IN order to cheer the miserable Jews by some consolation, God said, in what we considered yesterday, that the wantonness of Moab was known to him; he now adds, that he would visit with punishment the reproaches which had been mentioned. For it would have availed them but little that their wrongs had been observed by God, if no punishment had been prepared. Hence the Prophet reminds them that God is no idle spectator, who only observes what takes place in the world; but that there is a reward laid up for al the ungodly. And these verses are to be taken in connection, that the faithful may know that their wrongs are not unknown to God, and also that he will be their defender. But that the Jews might have a more sure confidence that God would be their deliverer, he interposes an oath. God at the same time shows that he is really touched with when he sees his people so cruelly and immoderately harassed, when the ungodly seem to think that an unbridled license is permitted them. God therefore shows here, that not only the salvation of his people is an object of his care, but that he undertakes their cause as though his anger was kindled; not that passions belong to him but such a form of speaking is adopted in order to express what the faithful could never otherwise conceive an idea of, that is,

to express the unspeakable love of God towards them, and his care for them.

He then says that he lives, as though he had sworn by his own life. As we have elsewhere seen that he swears by his life, so he speaks now. *Live do I*, that is, As I am God, so will I avenge these wrongs by which my people are now oppressed. And for the same reason he calls himself *Jehovah of hosts*, and the *God of Israel*. In the first clause he exalts his own power, that the Jews might know that he was endued with power; and then he mentions his goodness, because he had adopted them as his people. The meaning then is that God swears by his own life; and that the Jews might not think that this was done in vain, his power is brought before them, and then his favor is added.

Moab, he says, *shall be like Sodom, and the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah, even for the production of the nettle and for a mire of salt*; ^{f31} that is, their lands should be reduced to a waste, or should become wholly barren, so that nothing was to grow there but nettles, as the case is with desert places. As to the expression, the mine (*fodina*) or quarry of salt, it often occurs in scripture: a salt-pit denotes sterility in Hebrew. And the Prophet adds, that this would not be for a short time only; *It shall be* (he says) *a perpetual desolation*. He also adds, that this would be for the advantage of the Church; *for the residue of my people shall plunder them, and the remainder of my nation shall possess them*. He ever speaks of the residue; for as it was said yesterday, it was necessary for that people to be cleansed from their dregs, so that a small portion only would remain; and we know that not many of them returned from exile.

The import of the whole is, that though God determined to diminish his Church, so that a few only survived, yet these few would be the heirs of the whole land, and possess the kingdom, when God had taken vengeance on all their enemies.

It hence follows, according to the Prophet, that *this* shall be *to them for their pride*. We see that the Prophet's object is, to take away whatever bitterness the Jews might feel when insolently slandered by their enemies. As then there was danger of desponding, since nothing, as it was said yesterday, is more grievous to be borne than reproach, God does here expressly declare, that the proud triumph of their neighbors over the Jews would be their own ruin; for, as Solomon says, 'Pride goes before

destruction.’ ^{<201618>} Proverbs 16:18. And he again confirms what he had already referred to — that the Jews would not be wronged with impunity, for God had taken them under his guardianship, and was their protector: *Because they have reproached*, he says, *and triumphed over the people of Jehovah of hosts*. He might have said, over my people, as in the last verse; but there is something implied in these words, as though the Prophet had said, that they carried on war not with mortals but with God himself, whose majesty was insulted, when the Jews were so unjustly oppressed. It follows —

^{<360211>} **ZEPHANIAH 2:11**

11. The LORD *will be* terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and *men* shall worship him, every one from his place, *even* all the isles of the heathen.

11. Terribilis Iehova super eos, quia consumpsit omnes deos terrae: et adorabit eum quisque ex loco suo, omnes insulae gentium.

He proceeds with the same subject, — that God would show his power in aiding his people. But he calls him a *terrible* God, who had for a time patiently endured the wantonness of his enemies, and thus became despised by them: for the ungodly, we know, never submit to God unless they are constrained by his hand; and then they are not bent so as willingly to submit to his authority; but when forced they are silent. ^{f32} This is what the Prophet means in these words; as though he had said, that the wicked now mock God, as they disregard his power, but that they shall find how terrible an avenger of his people he is, so that they would have to dread him. And then he compares the superstitions of the nations with true religion; as though he had said, that this would be to the Jews as a reward for their piety, inasmuch as they worshipped the only true God, and that all idols would be of no avail against the help of God. And this was a necessary admonition; for the ungodly seemed to triumph for a time, not only over a conquered people, but over God himself, and thus gloried in their superstitious and vain inventions. The Prophet, therefore, confirms their desponding minds; for God, he says, will at length *consume all the gods of the nations*.

The verb רָזַח, *reze*, means strictly to make lean or to famish, but is to be taken here metaphorically, as signifying to consume. God then will famish all the inventions of the nations: and he alludes to that famine which idols had occasioned through the whole world; as though he had said, that God’s glory would shortly appear, which would exterminate whatever glory the false gods had obtained among them, so that it would melt away like fatness.

He at last adds, that the remotest nations would become suppliants to God; for by saying, *adore him shall each from his place*,^{f33} he doubtless means, that however far off the countries might be, the distance would be no hindrance to God’s name being celebrated, when his power became known to remote lands. And, for the same reason, he mentions *the islands of the nations*, that is, countries beyond the sea: for the Hebrews, as it has been elsewhere observed, call those countries islands which are far distant, and divided by the sea.^{f34} In short, the Prophet shows, that the redemption of the people would be so wonderful, that the fame of it would reach the farthest bounds of the earth, and constrain foreign nations to give glory to the true God, and that it would dissipate all the mists of superstition, so that idols would be exposed to scorn and contempt. It follows —

<div><360212>ZEPHANIAH2:12</div>	
12. Ye Ethiopians also, ye <i>shall be</i> slain by my sword.	12. Etiam vos Ethiopes, interfecti gladio meo ipsi (<i>alii vertunt, cum ipsis.</i>)

The Prophet extends farther the threatened vengeance, and says, that God would also render to the Ethiopians the reward which they deserved; for they had also harassed the chosen people. But if God punished that nation, how could Ammon and Moab hope to escape? For how could God spare so great a cruelty, since he would visit with punishment the remotest nations? For the hatred of the Moabites and of the Ammonites, as we have said, was less excusable, because they were related to the children of Abraham. They ought, on this account, to have mitigated their fierceness: besides, vicinity ought to have rendered them more humane. But as they exceeded other nations in cruelty, a heavier punishment awaited them.

Now this comparison was intended for this end — that the Jews might know that God would be inexorable towards the Moabites, by whom they had been so unjustly harassed, since even the Ethiopians would be punished, who yet were more excusable on account of their distance.

As to the words, some regard the demonstrative pronoun **הֵמָּה**, *eme*, they, as referring to the Babylonians, and others, to the Moabites. I prefer to understand it of the Moabites, if we read, like them, or with them, as these interpreters consider it: for they regard the particle **אִתָּם**, *at*, with, or **כְּ**, *caph*, like, to be understood, Ye Ethiopians shall be slain by my sword like them, or with them. It would in this case doubtless apply to the Moabites. But it seems to me that the sentence is irregular, *even ye Ethiopians*, and then, *they shall be slain by any sword*. The Prophet begins the verse in the second person, summoning the Ethiopians to appear before God’s tribunal; he afterwards adds in the third person, they shall be slain by my sword.^{f35}

God calls whatever evils were impending over the Ethiopians his sword; for though they were destroyed by the Chaldeans yet it was done under the guidance of God himself. The Chaldeans made war under his authority, as the Assyrians did, who had been previously employed by him to execute his vengeance. It follows —

<360213>ZEPHANIAH2:13	
13. And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, <i>and</i> dry like a wilderness.	13. Et extendet manum suam ad Aquilomen, et perdet Assyriam, et ponet Ninevem in vastitatem, desolationem instar deserti.

The Prophet proceeds here to the Assyrians, whom we know to have been special enemies to the Church of God. For the Moabites and the Ammonites were fans only, as we have elsewhere seen, as they could not do much harm by their own strength. Hence they stirred up the Assyrians, they stirred up the Ethiopians and remote nations. The meaning, then, is, that no one of all the enemies of the Church would be left unpunished by God, as every one would receive a reward for his cruelty. He speaks now of God in the third person; but in the last verse God himself said, that the

Ethiopians would be slain by his sword. The Prophet adds here, *He will extend his hand to the north*; that is, God will not complete his judgments on the Ethiopians; but he will go farther, even to Nineveh and to all the Assyrians.

Nineveh, we know, was the metropolis of the empire, before the Assyrians were conquered by the Babylonians. Thus Babylon then recovered the sovereignty which it had lost; and Nineveh, though not wholly demolished, was yet deprived of its ruling power, and gradually lost its name and its wealth, until it was reduced into a waste; for the building of Ctesiphon, as we have elsewhere seen, proved its ruin. But the Prophet, no doubt, proceeds here to administer comfort to the Jews, lest they should despair, while the Lord did not interfere. And the extension of the hand means as though he said, that his own time is known to the Lord, and that he would put forth his power when needful. Assyria was north as to Judea: hence he says, to the north will the Lord extend his hand, and will destroy Assyria; he will make Nineveh a desolation, that it may be like the desert. It follows

<360214> ZEPHANIAH 2:14	
14. And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; <i>their</i> voice shall sing in the windows; desolation <i>shall be</i> in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar work.	14. Et cubabunt in medio ejus greges, omnes bestiae gentium: etiam onocrotalus, etiam noctua (<i>alii vertunt, pro onocrotalo, ibin, alii, cuculum; alii, pro noctua, ericium</i>) in postibus ejus pernocabunt; vox cantabit in fenestra, in poste vastitatis (<i>alii vertunt, corvum; sed nomen vastitatis, quod postulat ratio grammaticae, retinendum nobis est,</i>) quia nudavit cedrum (<i>vel, contignationem.</i>)

The Prophet describes here the state of the city and the desolation of the country. He says, that the habitations of flocks would be in the midst of the city Nineveh. The city, we know, was populous; but while men were so many, there was no place for flocks, especially in the middle of a city so

celebrated. Hence no common change is here described by the Prophet, when he says, that *flocks would lie down in the middle of Nineveh*; and he adds, *all wild beasts*. For beasts, which seek seclusion and shun the sight of men, are wont to come forth, when they find a country desolate and deserted; and they range then at large, as it is the case after a slaughter in war; and when any region is emptied of its inhabitants, the wolves, the lions, and other wild beasts, roam here and there at full liberty. So the Prophet says, that wild beasts would come from other parts and remote places, and find a place where Nineveh once stood.^{f36} He adds that the bitterns, or the storks or the cuckoos, and similar wild birds would be there.^{f37} As to their various kinds, I make no laborious research; for it is enough to know the Prophet's design: besides, the Jews themselves, who boldly affirm that either the bittern or the stork is meant, yet adduce nothing that is certain. What, in short, this description means, is — that the place, which before a vast multitude of men inhabited, would become so forsaken, that wild beasts and nocturnal birds would be its only inhabitants.

But we must bear in mind what I have stated, that all these things were set before the Jews, that they might patiently bear their miseries, understanding that God would become their defender. For this is the only support that remains for us under very grievous evils, as Paul reminds us in the first chapter of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians; for he says, that the time will come when the Lord shall give to us relief and refreshment, and that he will visit our adversaries with punishment
<530101> 2 Thessalonians 1:1.

The Prophet mentions especially Nineveh, that the Jews might know that there is nothing so great and splendid in the world which God does not esteem of less consequence than the salvation of his Church, as it is said in Isaiah, I will give Egypt as thy ransom. So God threatens the wealthiest city, that he might show how much he loved his chosen people. And the Jews could not have attributed this to their own worthiness; but the cause of so great a love depended on their gratuitous adoption. It afterwards follows —

15. This *is* the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, *I am*, and *there is* none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, *and* wag his hand.

15. Haec urbs exultabunda, quae sedebat confidenter, quae dicebat in corde suo, Ego et non praeter me amplius: quomodo facta est in vastationem, cubile animalibus? Quisquis transierit (*vel*, omnis viator) super eam subilabit, agitabit manum suam.

He seems to have added this by way of anticipation, lest the magnificent splendor of the city Nineveh should frighten the Jews, as though it were exempt from all danger. The Prophet therefore reminds them here, that though Nineveh was thus proud of its wealth, it could not yet escape the hand of God; nay, he shows that the greatness, on account of which Nineveh extolled itself, would be the cause of its ruin; for it would cast itself down by its own pride: as a wall, when it swells, will not long stand; so also men, when they inwardly swell, and vent their own boastings, burst; and though no one pushes them down, they fall of themselves. Such a destruction the Prophet denounces on the Ninevites and the Assyrians.

This, he says, *is the exulting city, which sat in confidence*. Isaiah rebrotes in nearly the same words the pride of Babylon: but what Isaiah said of Babylon our Prophet justly transfers here to Nineveh. But he no doubt had respect to the Jews, and exhibits Nineveh in its state of ruin, lest the power of that city should dazzle their eyes; for we are seized with wonder, when anything grand and splendid presents itself to us. Here then Zephaniah makes a representation of Nineveh and sets it before the Jews: Behold, he says, ye see this city full of exultation; ye also see that it rests as in a state of safety; for it is conscious of no fear; it regards itself exempt from the common lot of men, as though it was built in the clouds. This city, he says, is above all others celebrated; but let not frail and evanescent splendor terrify you; for God will doubtless in his own time overthrow it and reduce it to nothing.

Let us also in the meantime observe what I have lately referred to, — that the cause of the ruin of Nineveh is described, which was, that it had

promised to itself a perpetuity in the world. But let us remember, that in this city is presented to us an example, which belongs in common to all nations, — that God cannot endure the presumption of men, when inflated by their own greatness and power, they do not think themselves to be men, nor humble themselves in a way suitable to the condition of men, but forget themselves, as though they could exalt themselves above the heavens.

But it is necessary to examine the words: Nineveh *said in her heart, I, and besides me no other*. By these words the Prophet means, that Nineveh was so blinded by its splendor that it now defied every change of fortune. Had Babylon spoken thus, it would have been no wonder, for it had taken from Nineveh its sovereignty. But we see that the same pride infatuates people as well as superior kings; for each thinks himself to be great alone, and when he compares himself with others, he looks on them as far below him, as though they were placed beneath his feet. Thus then the Prophet shows in few words what was the cause of the ruin of Nineveh: it thought that its condition on the earth was fixed and perpetual. If then we desire to be protected by God's hand, let us bear in mind what our condition is, and daily, yea, hourly prepare ourselves for a change, except God be pleased to sustain us. Our stability is to depend only on the aid of God, and from consciousness of our infirmity, to tremble in ourselves, lest a forgetfulness of our state should creep in.

He afterwards adds, *How has it become a desolation?* The Prophet accommodates his words to the capacities of men: for the ruin of Nineveh might have appeared incredible. Hence the Prophet by a question rouses the minds of the faithful, that they might not doubt the truth of what God declared, for he would work in an extraordinary manner. This how then intimates, that the Jews ought not to be incredulous, while thinking that Nineveh was on all sides fortified, so as to prevent the occurrence of anything disastrous: for God would, in a wonderful manner and beyond what is usual, overthrow it. *How, then, has it become a desolation, a resting-place for beasts?*

He then subjoins, *Every one who passes by will hiss and shake his hand*. The Prophet seems to point out the future reproach of Nineveh, and to confirm also by a different mode of speaking what he had before said, that its ruin would be wonderful; for the shaking of the hand and hissing are

marks of reproach: Behold Nineveh, which so much flattered itself! we now see only its sad ruins. The Prophet, I have no doubt, means here by hissing and the shaking of the hind, that Nineveh would become an ignominious spectacle to all people: and the same mode of speaking often occurs in the Prophets. All shall hiss at thee; that is, I will make thee a reproach and a disgrace. Then the Prophet, as I have already said, still declares the same truths that the ruin of Nineveh would be like a miracle; for all those who pass by would be amazed; as though he had said, Behold, they will hiss — What is this? and then they will shake the hand — What can be firm in this world? We see the principal seat of empire demolished, and differing nothing from a desert. We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet.

As this doctrine is also necessary for us at this day, we must notice the circumstances to which we have referred. If, then, our enemies triumph now, and their haughtiness is intolerable, let us know, that the sooner the vengeance of God will overtake them; if they are become insensible in their prosperity, and secure, and despise all dangers, they thus provoke God's wrath, and especially if to their pride and hardness they add cruelty, so as basely to persecute the Church of God, to spoil, to plunder, and to slay his people, as we see them doing. Since then our enemies are so wanton, we may see as in a mirror their near destruction, such as is foretold by the Prophet: for he spoke not only of his own age, but designed to teach us, by the prophetic spirit, how dear to God is the safety of his Church; and the future lot of the ungodly till the end of the world will no doubt be such as Nineveh is described here to have been that though they swell with pride for a time, and promise themselves every success against the innocent, God will yet put a stop to their insolence and check their cruelty, when the proper time shall come. I shall not today begin the third chapter, for it contains a new subject.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou triest us in the warfare of the cross, and arouses most powerful enemies, whose barbarity might justly terrify and dishearten us, were we not depending on thine aid, — O grant, that we may call to mind how wonderfully thou didst in former times deliver thy chosen people, and how seasonably thou didst bring them help, when they were oppressed

and entirely overwhelmed, so that we may learn at this day to flee to thy protection, and not doubt, but that when thou becomest propitious to us, there is in thee sufficient power to preserve us, and to lay prostrate our enemies, how much soever they may now exult and think to triumph above the heavens, so that they may at length know by experience that they are earthly and frail creatures, whose life and condition is like the mist which soon vanishes: and may we learn to aspire after that blessed eternity, which is laid up for us in heaven by Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FOURTH

<360301>ZEPHANIAH 3:1, 2	
1. Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city!	1. Vae pollutae et inquinatae, urbi direptrici (<i>vel</i> , fraudatrici.)
2. She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God.	2. Non audivit ad vocem; non suscepit disciplinam (<i>vel</i> , correctionem;) in Iehova non est confisa; ad Deum suum non appropinquit.

THE Prophet speaks here again against Jerusalem; for first, the Jews ought ever to have been severely reproved, as they were given to many sins; and secondly, because there was always there some seed which needed consolation: and this has been the way pursued, as we have hitherto seen, by all the Prophets. But we must also bear in mind, that the books now extant were made up of prophetic addresses, that we might understand what was the sum of the doctrine delivered.

The Prophet here makes this charge against the Jews, that they were *polluted and become filthy*. And he addresses Jerusalem, where the sanctuary was; and it might therefore seem to have been superior to other cities; for God had not in vain chosen that as the place for his worship. But the Prophet shows how empty and fallacious was any boasting of this kind; for the city which God had consecrated for himself had polluted itself with many sins. The Prophet seems to allude to the ancient rites of the law, which, though many, had been prescribed, we know, by God, that the people might observe a holy course of life: for the ceremonies could not of themselves wash away their filth; but the people were instructed by these external things to worship God in a holy and pure manner. As then they often washed themselves with water, and as they carefully observed other

rites of outward sanctity, the Prophet derides their hypocrisy, for they did not regard the real design of the ceremonies. Hence he says, that they were polluted, though in appearance they might be deemed the most pure; for they were defiled as to their whole life.^{f38}

He adds that the city was **הֵינֶה**, *eiune*; some render it the city of dove, or, a dove; for the word has this meaning: and they take it metaphorically for a foolish and thoughtless city, as we find it to be so understood in **<280711>** Hosea 7:11; where Ephraim was said to be a dove, because the people were void of reason and knowledge, and of their own accord exposed themselves to traps and snares. Some then consider this place to have this meaning, — that Jerusalem, which ought to have been wise, was yet wholly fatuitous and foolish. But it may be easily gathered from the context, that the Prophet means another thing, even this, — that Jerusalem was given to plunder and fraud; for the verb **יָנָה**, *ine*, signifies to defraud and to take by force what belongs to another; and it means also to circumvent as well as to plunder. He therefore means no doubt, that Jerusalem was a city full of every kind of iniquity, as he had before called it a polluted city; and then he adds an explanation.

The Prophet in the first verse seems to have in view the two tables of the law. God, we know, requires in the law that his people should be holy; and then he teaches the way of living justly and innocently. Hence when the Prophet called Jerusalem a polluted city, he meant briefly to show that the whole worship of God was there corrupted, and that no regard for true religion flourished there; for the Jews thought that they had performed all their duty to God, when they washed away their filth by water. Such was the extremely foolish notion which they entertained: but we know and they ought to have known that the worship of God is spiritual. He afterwards adds, that the *city was rapacious*, under which term he includes every kind of injustice.

It follows, *She heard not the voice*, she *received not correction*. The Prophet now explains and defines what the pollution was of which he had spoken: for true religion begins with teachableness; when we submit to God and to his word, it is really to enter on the work of worshipping him aright. But when heavenly truth is despised, though men may toil much in outward rites, yet their impiety discovers itself by their contumacy, inasmuch as they suffer not themselves to be ruled by God's authority.

Hence the Prophet shows, that whatever the Jews thought of their purity at Jerusalem, it was nothing but filth and pollution. He says, that they were unteachable, because they did not hear the Prophets sent to them by God.

This ought to be carefully noticed; for without this beginning many torment themselves in the work of serving God, and do nothing, because obedience is better than sacrifice. If, then, we wish our efforts to be approved by God, we must begin with faith; for except the word of God obtains credit with us, whatever we may offer to him are mere human inventions. It is, in the second place, added, that they did not receive correction; and this was no superfluous addition. For when God sees that we are not submissive, and that we do not willingly come to him when he calls us, he strengthens his instruction by chastisements. He allures us at first to himself, he employs kind and gentle invitations; but when he sees us delaying, or even going back, he begins to treat us more roughly and more severely: for teaching without the goads of reproof would have no effect. But when God teaches and reproves in vain, it then appears that our disposition is wicked and perverse. So the Prophet intended here to show the wickedness of his people as extreme, by saying, that they *heard not the voice nor received correction*; as though he had said, that the wickedness of his people was unhealable, for they not only rejected the doctrine of salvation, when offered, but also obstinately rejected all warnings, and would not bear any correction.

But we must bear in mind, that the Prophet had to do with that holy people whom God had chosen as his peculiar treasure. There is therefore no reason why those who profess the name of Christians at this day should exempt themselves from this condemnation; for our condition is not better than the condition of that people. Jerusalem was in an especial manner, as we have already said, the sanctuary, as it were, of God: and yet we see how severely the Prophet reproves Jerusalem and all its inhabitants. We have no cause to flatter ourselves, except we willingly submit to God, and suffer ourselves to be ruled by his word, and except we also patiently bear correction, when his teaching takes no suitable effect, and when there is need of sharp goads to stimulate us.

He afterwards adds, that it *did not trust in the Lord, nor draw nigh to its God*. The Prophet discovers here more clearly the spring of impiety —

that Jerusalem placed not the hope of salvation in God alone; for from hence flowed all the mass of evils which prevailed; because if we inquire how it is that men burn with avarice, why they are insatiable, and why they wantonly defraud and plunder one another, we shall find the cause to be this — that they trust not in God. Rightly then does the Prophet mention this here, among other pollutions at Jerusalem, as the chief — that it did not put its trust in God. The same also is the cause and origin of all superstitions; for if men felt assured that God alone is enough for them, they would not follow here and there their own inventions. We hence see that unbelief is not only the mother of all the evil deeds by which men willfully wrong and injure one another, but that it is also the cause of all superstitions.

He says, in the last place, that it *did not draw nigh to God*. The Prophet no doubt charges the Jews that they willfully departed from God when he was nigh them; yea, that they wholly alienated themselves from him, while he was ready to cherish them, as it were, in his own bosom. This is indeed a sin common to all who seek not God; but Jerusalem sinned far more grievously, because she would not draw nigh to God, by whom she saw that she was sought. For why was the law given, why was adoption vouchsafed, and in short, why had they the various ordinances of religion, except that they might join themselves to God? ‘And now Israel,’ said Moses, ‘what does the Lord thy God require of thee, except to cleave to him?’ God thus intended his law to be, as it were, a sacred bond of union between him and the Jews. Now when they wandered here and there, that they might not be united to him, it was a diabolical madness. Hence the Prophet here does not only accuse the Jews of not seeking God, but of withdrawing themselves from him; and thus they were ungovernable. The Lord sought to tame them; but they were like wild beasts. It now follows

3. Her princes within her *are* roaring lions; her judges *are* evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow.

3. Principes ejus in medio ejus, leones rugientes; judices ejus lupi vespertini, non lacerant ad mane (*alii non differunt, nempe ossa comminuere; sed* [גרם], *proprie significat, conterere vel, frangere ergo de ossibus loquitur Propheta, quod scilicet non expectarent usque ad mane, ut ipsa contererent dentibus; sed prae fame, vel potius rabie praedam statim lacerarent; imo etiam contererent ossa dentibus.*)

The Prophet now explains what we have stated respecting plunder and fraud. He confirms that he had not without reason called Jerusalem הַיּוֹנָה, *eiune*, a rapacious city, or one given to plunder; for the princes were like lions and the judges like wolves. And when he speaks of judges, he does not spare the common people; but he shows that all orders were then corrupt: for though no justice or equity is regarded by the people, there will yet remain some shame among the judges, so as to retain the people at least within some limits, that an extreme licentiousness may not prevail: but when robbery is practiced in the court of justice, what can be said of such a city? We hence see that the Prophet in these words describes an extreme confusion: The princes of Jerusalem, he says, are lions. And we have elsewhere similar declarations; for the Prophets, when it was their object to condemn all from the least to the greatest, did yet direct their discourse especially to the judges.

And this is worthy of being noticed, for there was then no Church of God, except at Jerusalem. Yet the Prophet says, that the judges, and prophets, and priests, were all apostates. What comfort could the faithful have had? But we hence see that the fear of God had not wholly failed in his elect, and that they firmly and with an invincible heart contended against all offenses and trials of this kind. Let us also learn to fortify ourselves at this day with the same courage, so that we may not faint, however much impiety may everywhere prevail, and all religion may seem extinct among men.

But we may also hence learn, how foolishly the Papists pride themselves in their vain titles, as though they thought that God was bound as it were to them, because they have bishops and pastors. But the Prophet shows, that even those who performed the ordinary office of executing the laws could yet be the wicked and perfidious despisers of God. He also shows, that neither prophets nor priests ought to be spared; for when God sets them over his Church, he gives them no power to tyrannize, so that they might dare to do anything with impunity, and not be reproved. For though the priesthood under the law was sacred, we yet see that it was subject to correction. So let no one at this day claim for himself a privilege, as though he was exempt from all instruction and reproof, while occupying a high station among the people of God.

He distinguishes between princes and judges; and the reason is, because the kingdom was as yet standing. So the courtiers, who were in favor and authority with the king, drew a part of the spoil to themselves, and the judges devoured another part. Though Scripture often makes no difference between these two names, yet I doubt not but he means by שְׂרִים, *sherim*, princes, the chiefs who were courtiers; and he calls them שֹׁפְטִים, *shepthim*, judges, who administered justice. And he says that the judges were evening wolves, that is, hungry, for wolves become furious in the evening when they have been roaming about all day and have found nothing. As their want sharpens the savageness of wolves, so the Prophet says that the judges were hungry like evening wolves, whose hunger renders them furious. And for the same purpose he adds, that they *broke not the bones in the morning*; that is, they waited not till the dawn to break the bones;^{f39} for when they devoured the flesh they also employed their teeth in breaking the bones, because their voracity was so great. We now apprehend the Prophet's meaning. It afterwards follows —

<360304>ZEPHANIAH3:4	
4. Her prophets <i>are</i> light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.	4. Prophetæ ejus leves (<i>vel</i> , futiles,) viri transgressionum; sacerdotes ejus polluerunt sanctum (<i>vel</i> , sanctuarium,) sustulerunt legem.

The Prophet again reverts to the pollution and filth of which he has spoken in the first verse. He shows that he had not without reason cried against the polluted city; for though the Jews used their washings, they could not yet make themselves clean in this manner before God, as the whole of religion was corrupted by them.

He says that *the Prophets were light*. He alone speaks here, and he condemns the many. We hence see that there is no reason why the ungodly should allege their great number, when God by his word accuses them, as the Papists do at this day, who deny it to be right in one or two, or few men, to speak against their impiety, however bad the state of things may be; there must be the consent of the whole world, as though the Prophet was not alone, and had not to contend with a great many. It is indeed true that he taught at the same time with the Prophet Jeremiah, as we have elsewhere seen; but yet hardly two or three did then discharge faithfully their office of teaching; and from this and other places we learn that the false Prophets, relying on their number, were on that account bolder. But Zephaniah did not for this reason cease to cry against them. However much then the false Prophets raged against him, and terrified him by the show of their number, he still exercised his liberty in condemning them. So at this day, though the whole world should unite in promoting impiety, there is yet no reason why the few should be disheartened when observing the worship of God perverted; but they ought on the contrary to encourage themselves by this example, and strenuously to resist thousands of men if necessary; for no union formed by men can possibly lessen the authority of God.

It now follows that they were *men of transgressions*. What we render light, others render empty; (*vacuous*;) but the word פֹּחֲזִים, *puchezim*, means strictly men of nought, and also the rash, and those who are void of judgment as well as of all moderation. In short, it is the same as though the Prophet had said that they were stupid and blind; and he says afterwards that they were fraudulent, than which there is nothing more inconsistent with the Prophetic office. But Zephaniah shows that the whole order was then so degenerated among the people, that the thickest darkness prevailed among those very leaders whose office it was to bring forth the light of celestial truth. And he makes a concession by calling them Prophets. The same we do at this day when we speak of Popish bishops. It is indeed certain that they are unworthy of so honorable a title; for they are blinder

than moles, so that they are far from being overseers. We also know, that they are like brute beasts; for they are immersed in their lusts: in short, they are unworthy to be called men. But we concede to them this title, in order that their turpitude may be more apparent. The Prophet did the same, when he said, that the Jews did not draw nigh to their God; he conceded to them what they boasted; for they ever wished to be regarded as the holy and peculiar people of God: but their ingratitude did hence become more evident, because they went back and turned to another object, when God was ready to embrace them, as though they designedly meant to show that they had nothing to do with him. It is then the same manner of speaking, that Zephaniah adopts here, when he says, that the Prophets were light and men of transgressions. ^{f40}

He then adds, The priests have polluted the holy place. The tribe of Levi, we know, had been chosen by God; and those who descended from him, were to be ministers and teachers to others: and for this reason the Lord in the law ordered the Levites to be dispersed through the whole country. He might indeed have given them as to the rest, a fixed habitation; but his will was, that they should be dispersed among the whole population, that no part of the land should be without good and faithful ministers. The Prophet now charges them, that they had polluted the holy place. By the word קֹדֶשׁ, *kodash* the Prophet means whatsoever is holy; at the same time he speaks of the sanctuary. Moreover, since the sanctuary was as it were the dwelling-place of God, when the Prophets speak of divine worship and religion, they include the whole under the word, Temple, as in this place. He says then that the sanctuary was polluted by the priests, and then that they took away or subverted the law. ^{f41}

We here see how boldly the Prophet charges the priests. There is then no reason why they who are divinely appointed over the Church should claim for themselves the liberty of doing what they please; for the priests might have boasted of this privilege, that without dispute everything was lawful for them. But we see that God not only calls them to order by his Prophets, but even blames them more than others, because they were less excusable. Now the Papists boast, that the clergy, even the very dregs collected from the filthiest filth, cannot err; which is extremely absurd; for they are not better than the successors of Aaron. But we see what the Prophet objects now to them, — that they *subverted the law*: he not only condemns their life, but says also, that they were perfidious towards God;

for they strangely corrupted the whole truth of religion. The Papists confess, that they indeed can sin, but that the sin dwells only in their moral conduct. They yet seek to exempt themselves from all the danger of going astray. Though the Levitical priests were indeed chosen by the very voice of God, we yet see that they were apostates. But God confirms the godly, that they might not abandon themselves to impiety, though they saw their very leaders going astray, and rushing headlong into ruin. For it behaved the faithful to fortify themselves with constancy, when the priests not only by their bad conduct withdrew the people from every fear of God, but also perverted every sound doctrine; it behaved, I say, the faithful to remain then invincible. Though then at this day those who hold the highest dignity in the Church neglect God and even despise every celestial truth, and thus rush headlong into ruin, and though they attempt to turn God's truth into falsehood, yet let our faith continue firm; for John has not without reason declared, that it ought to be victorious against the whole world. <620504> 1 John 5:4. It follows —

<360305> ZEPHANIAH 3:5

5. The just LORD *is* in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame.

5. Iehova justus in medio ejus, non faciet iniquitatem: mane, mane judicium suum proferet in lucem, non deficiet: neque tamen congnoſcet iniquus pudorem.

Here the Prophet throws back against hypocrites what they were wont to pretend, when they sought wickedly to reject every instruction and all warnings; for they said, that God dwelt in the midst of them, like the Papists at the present day, who raise up this as their shield against us, — that the Church is the pillar of the truth. Hence they think that all their wicked deeds are defended by this covering. So the Jews at that time had this boast ever on their lips, — We are notwithstanding the holy people of God, and he dwells in the midst of us, for he is worshipped in the Temple, which has been built, not according to men's will, but by his command; for that voice proceeded not from earth, but came from heaven, 'This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell.' <19D214> Psalm 132:14. Since then the Jews

were inflated with this presumption, the Prophet concedes what they claimed, that God dwelt among them; but it was for a far different purpose, which was, that they might understand, that his hand was nigh to punish their sins. This is one thing.

Jehovah is in the midst of them; Granted, he says; I allow that he dwells in this city; for he has commanded a temple to be built for him on Mount Sion, he has ordered a holy altar for himself; but why does God dwell among you, and has preferred this habitation to all others? Surely, he says, *he will not do iniquity*. Consider now what the nature of God is; for when he purposed to dwell among you, he certainly did not deny himself, nor did he cease to be what he is. There is therefore no reason for you to imagine, as though God intended, for the sake of those to whom he bound himself, to throw aside his own justice, or intended to pollute himself by the defilements of men. He warns the Jews, that they absurdly blended these things together. *God* then *who dwells in the midst of you, will not do iniquity*; that is, He will not approve of your evil deeds; and though he may for a time connive at them, he will not yet bear with them continually. Do not therefore foolishly flatter yourselves, as though God were the approver of your wickedness.

Some apply this to the people, — that they ought not to have done iniquity; but this is a strained exposition, and altogether foreign to the context. Most other interpreters give this meaning, that God is just and will do no iniquity, for he had sufficient reasons for executing his vengeance on a people so wicked. They hence think, that the Prophet anticipates the Jews, lest they murmured, as though the Lord was cruel or too rigid. He will not do iniquity, that is, Though the Lord may inflict on you a most grievous punishment, yet he cannot be arraigned by you as unjust; and ye in vain contend with him, for he will ever be found to be a righteous judge. But this also is a very frigid explanation. Let us bear in mind what I have already said, — that the Prophet here, by way of irony, concedes to the Jews, that God dwelt among them, but afterwards brings against them what they thought was a protection to them, — God dwells in the midst of you; I allow it, he says; but is not he a just God? Do not then dream that he is one like yourselves, that he approves of your evil deeds. God will not do iniquity; ye cannot prevail with him to renounce himself, or to change his own nature. Why then does God dwell in the midst of you? *In the morning, in the morning, he says, his judgment will he*

bring forth to light; the Lord will daily bring forth his judgment. How this is to be understood, we shall explain tomorrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that inasmuch as thou hast deigned to favor us with an honor so invaluable, as to adopt us for a holy people to thee, and to separate us from the world, — O grant, that we may not close our eyes against the light of thy truth, by which thou showest to us the way of salvation; but may we with true docility follow where thou callest us, and never cast away the fear of thy majesty, nor mock thee with frivolous ceremonies, but strive sincerely to devote ourselves wholly to thee, and to cleanse ourselves from all defilements, not only of the flesh, but also of the spirit, that by thus seeking true holiness, we may aspire after and diligently labor for that heavenly perfection, from which we are as yet far distant; and may we in the meantime, relying on the favor of thy only-begotten Son, lean on thy mercy; and while depending on it, may we ever grow up more and more into that true and perfect union, reserved for us in heaven, when we shall be made partakers of thy glory, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIFTH

WE began yesterday to explain the passage, where the Prophet says, that God dwelt at Jerusalem, but that he was notwithstanding just, and could not possibly associate with the ungodly and the wicked, because he changes not his nature to suit the humor of men.

It now follows, *In the morning, in the morning, his judgment will he bring forth to light*: by which words he means, either that God would be the avenger of wickedness, which seems to escape, as it were, his eyes, while he delays his punishment, or that he is ready to restore his people, whenever they are attentive to instruction. If the former view be approved, the sense will be this, — that hypocrites foolishly flatter themselves, when God spares them; for he will suddenly ascend his tribunal that he may visit them with punishment. Some however choose to apply this to the judgments executed on the Gentiles, of which the Jews had not once nor twice been reminded, but often, that they might in time repent. But there is no doubt but that the Prophet refers here to a judgment belonging to the Jews.

Let us now see whether this judgment is pronounced or inflicted. It would not ill suit the passage to understand it of the vengeance which God was hastening to execute, for the Jews were worthy of what had been severely threatened, because they falsely professed his name; and while they absurdly boasted that he dwelt among them, they withdrew themselves very far from him. It is however no less suitable to refer this to teaching, so that the Prophet thus enhanced the sin of the people, because they had hardened themselves after so many and so constant warnings, which continually sounded in their ears, as God elsewhere complains, that though he rose early, and indeed daily, this solicitude had been without its fruit. The verb in the future tense will thus signify a continued act, for God ceased not to exhort to repentance those wretched beings who had ears which were deaf. And this view strikingly corresponds with what immediately follows, that he fails not; for such a perseverance was a proof of unwearied mercy, when God continued to send Prophets one after the other.

He now adds, *The wicked knows no shame*. He means what he has just referred to — that the people had become so hardened in their wickedness that they could not be reformed, either by instruction or by threats, or by the scourges of God.

If we refer judgment to teaching, which I approve, the meaning will be — that though God, by making known daily his law, kindled as it were a lamp, which discovered all evils, yet the ungodly were not ashamed. But if we understand it, as they say, of actual judgment, the meaning will be in substance the same — that the ungodly repented not, though the hand of God openly appeared; and though he rose to judgment, yet he says, they knew not what it was to feel ashamed. As to the main subject there is no ambiguity; for the Prophet means only that the people were past recovery; for though God proved himself a judge by manifest evidences, and even by his own law, they yet felt no shame, but went on in their wicked courses. The word judgment, in the singular number, seems to have been put here in the sense of a rule, by which men live religiously and justly, and a rule which ought to make men ashamed.^{f42} It now follows —

<360306>ZEPHANIAH3:6, 7	
6. I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant.	6. Excidi gentes; vastate sunt arces earum; perdidi vicos earum, ut nemo transeat; vastatae sunt urbes earum, ut non sit vir, no sit qui habitet.
7. I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, and corrupted all their doings.	7. Dixi, certe timebis me, suscipies disciplinam; et non excidetur habitatio ejus, quicquid visitavi super eam: certe properarunt, corruperunt omnia studia sua.

Here the Prophet shows in another way that there was no hope for a people, who could not have been instructed by the calamities of others, to seek to return to God’s favor. For God here complains that he had in vain

punished neighboring nations, and made them examples, in order to recall the Jews to himself. Had they been of a sane mind they might have been led, by their quiet state, while God spared them, to consider what they had deserved — If this is done in the green tree, what at length will be done in the dry? They might then have thought within themselves, that a most grievous calamity was at hand, except they anticipated God's wrath, which had grown ripe against them; and God also testified that he intended by such examples to stay the judgment which he might have already justly executed on them. As they then even hastened it, it is evident that their wickedness was past remedy. This is the sum of the whole.

He says first, I *have cut off nations*; by which words he shows that he warned the Jews to repent, not only by one example, but by many examples; for not one instance only of God's wrath had appeared, but God had on all sides manifested himself to be a judge, in inflicting punishment on one nation after another. Since then they had been so often warned, we may hence learn that they were wholly blinded by their wickedness.

He now enhances the atrocity of the punishment inflicted, and says, that *citadels had been demolished and streets cut off, that no one passed through*; and then, that *cities had been reduced to solitude, so that there was no inhabitant*. For when punishment is of an ordinary kind, it is wont, for the most part, to be disregarded; but when God showed, by so remarkable proofs, that he was displeased with the nations, that is, with the ignorant, who in comparison with the Jews were innocent, how could such an instance as this be disregarded by the Jews, whom God thus recalled to himself, except that they were of a disposition wholly desperate and irreclaimable? We now then see why the Prophet enlarges on the punishments which, having been inflicted on the nations, ought to have been considered by the Jews. ^{f43}

He now subjoins the object which God had in view, *I said, Surely thou wilt fear me*. Here God assumes the character of man, as he does often elsewhere: for he does not wait for what is future, as though he was doubtful; but all things, as we know, are before his eyes. Hence God was not deceived, as though something had happened beyond his expectation; but as I have already said, he undertakes here the character of man; for he could not otherwise have sufficiently expressed how inexcusable the Jews were who had despised all his warnings. For what was God's design when

he punished the heathens, one nation after another, except that the Jews might be awakened by the evils of others, and not provoke his wrath against themselves? Paul makes use of the same argument.

‘On account of these things,’ he says,
‘the wrath of God comes upon all the unbelieving.’
<450117>Romans 1:17.

Inasmuch as men for the most part deceive themselves by self-flatteries and cherish with extreme indulgence their own wickedness, Paul says, that the wrath of God comes on the unbelieving: and it is a singular proof of God’s love, that he does not immediately assail us, but sets before us the examples of others. As when any one lays hold of his servant in the presence of his son, and punishes him severely, the son must be moved by the sight, except he be wholly an abandoned character: however, in such a case the father’s love manifests itself; for he withholds his hand from his son and inflicts punishment on the servant, and this for the benefit of his son, that he may learn wisdom by what another suffers. God declares in this place that he had done the same; but he complains that it had been without benefit, for the Jews had frustrated his purpose.

It may be here asked, whether men so frustrate God that he looks for something different from what happens. I have already said, that God speaks after the manner of men, and in a language not strictly correct: and hence we ought not here to enter or penetrate into the secret purpose of God, but to be satisfied with this reason, — that if we profit nothing when God warns us either by his word or by his scourges, we are then equally guilty, as though he was deceived by us: and hence also the madness of those is reprov’d, who are unwilling to ascribe anything to God but what is conveyed in these common forms of speech: God says, that he wills the salvation of all, <540204> 1 Timothy 2:4;) hence there is no election, which makes a distinction between one man and another; but the Lord leaves the whole human race to their free-will, so that every one may provide for himself as he pleases; otherwise the will of God must be twofold. So unlearned men vainly talk; and such not only show their ignorance in religion, but are also wholly destitute of common sense. For what is more absurd than to conclude, that there is a twofold will in God, because he speaks otherwise with us than is consistent with his incomprehensible majesty? God’s will then is one and simple, but manifold as to the

perceptions of men; for we cannot comprehend his hidden purpose, which angels adore with reverence and humility. Hence the Lord accommodates himself to the measure of our capacities, as this passage teaches us with sufficient clearness. For if we receive what the fanatics imagine, then God is like man, who hopes well, and finds afterwards that he has been deceived: but what can be more alien to his glory? We hence see how these insane men not only obscure the glory of God, but also labor, as far as they can, to reduce his whole essence to nothing. But this mode of speaking ought to be sufficiently familiar to us, — that God justly complains that he has been deceived by us, when we do not repent, inasmuch as he invites us to himself, and even stimulates us, *I said, Surely thou wilt fear me.*

This word *said*, ought not then to be referred to the hidden counsel of God, but to the subject itself, and that is, that it was time to repent. Who would not have hoped but that you would have returned to the right way? When the next house was on fire, how was it possible for you to sleep, except ye were extremely stupid? And when so many examples were presented before your eyes without any advantage, it is evident that there is no more any hope of repentance. Thou, then, wilt fear me; that is, God might have hoped for some amendment, though he had not yet touched you even with his smallest finger; for ye beheld, while in a tranquil state, how severely he punished the contempt of his justice as to the heathens. He uses a similar language in ^{<230504>}Isaiah 5:4,

‘My vine, what have I done to thee? or what could I have done to thee more than what I have done? I expected thee to bring forth fruit; but, behold, thou hast brought forth wild grapes.’

God in that passage expostulates with the Jews as though they had by their perfidiousness deceived him. But we know, that whatever happens was known to him before the creation of the world: but, as I have already said, the fact itself is to be regarded by us, and not the hidden judgment of God.

He afterwards adds, *Thou wilt receive correction*; that is, thou wilt be hereafter more tractable: for monstrous is our stupidity, when we fear not God’s vengeance; when yet it evidently appears that we are warned, as I have already said, to repent, by all the examples of judgments which are daily presented to us. But if we proceed in our wickedness, what else is it but to kick against the goad, as the old proverb is? In short, we here see

described an extreme wickedness and obstinacy, which admitted of no remedy.

Hence the Prophet adds again, *And cut off should not be her habitation, howsoever I might have visited her*; that is, though the Jews had already provoked me, so that the punishment they have deserved was nigh; yet I was ready to withdraw my hand and to forgive them, if they repented: not that God ever turns aside from his purpose, for there is no shadow of turning in him; but he sets before them the fact as it was; for the subject here, as I have said, is not respecting the secret purpose of God, but we ought to confine ourselves to the means which he employs in promoting our salvation. God had already threatened the Jews for many years; he had as yet deferred to execute what he had threatened. In the meantime his wrath had been manifested through the whole neighborhood; the heathen nations had suffered the severest judgments. God here declares, that he had been so lenient to his people as to give time to repent; and he complains that he had delayed in vain, for they had gone on in their wickedness, and had mocked, as it were, his patience. When, therefore, he says, *Cut off should not be her habitation, howsoever I might have visited her*, or have visited her, he pursues still the same mode of speaking, that is, that he was prepared to forgive the Jews, though he had before destined them to destruction; not that he, as to himself, would retract that sentence; but that he was still reconcilable, if the Jews had been touched by any feeling of repentance.^{f44}

He at last adds, *Surely*, (some render it, *but*,) *surely they have hastened*. The verb שָׁחַם, *shecam*, means properly to rise early, but is to be taken metaphorically in the sense of hastening; as though he had said, They run headlong to corrupt their ways. God had said that he had been indulgent to them for this end — that he might lead them by degrees to repentance: now he complains, that they on the contrary had run another way, when they saw that he suspended his judgments, as though it was their designed object to accelerate his wrath. Thus they hastened to corrupt their ways. The meaning, then, is that this people were not only irreclaimable in their obstinacy, but that they were also sottish and presumptuous, as though they wished to hasten the judgment, which the Lord was ready for a time to defer. It now follows —

8. Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination *is* to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, *even* all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.

8. Propterea expectate me, dicit Jehova, usque ad diem quo surgam ad praedam; quia iudicium meum (*hoc est*, decretum est mihi,) ut colligam gentes, ut congregem regna; ut effundam super ipsa (regna, *vel*, super ipsas gentes) indignationem meam, totum furorem irae meae; quia igne zeli (*vel*, indignationis meae) vorabitur tota terra.

God here declares that the last end was near, since he had found by experience that he effected nothing by long forbearance, and since he had even found the Jews becoming worse, because he had so mercifully treated them. Some think that the address is made to the faithful, that they might prepare themselves to bear the cross; but this view is foreign to the subject of the Prophet: and though this view has gained the consent of almost all, I yet doubt not but that the Prophet, as I have now stated, breaks out into a complaint, and says, that God would not now deal in words with a people so irreclaimable.

Look for me, he says; that is, I am now present fully prepared: I have hitherto endeavored to turn you, but your hearts have become hardened in depravity. But inasmuch as I have lost all my labor in teaching, warning, and exhorting you, even when I presented to you examples on every side among heathen nations, which ought to have stimulated you to repentance, and inasmuch as I have effected nothing, it is now all over with you — *Look for me*: I shall no more contend with you, nor is there any ground for you to hope that I shall any more send Prophets to you.

Look then for me, until I shall rise — for what purpose? *to the prey*. Some render the word לַעֲדָה, *laod*, forever; but the Prophet means, that God was so offended with the contumacy of the people, that he would now

plunder, spoil and devour, and forget his kindness, which had been hitherto a sport to them — I shall come as a wild beast; as lions rage, lacerate, tear, and devour, so also will I now do with you; for I have hitherto too kindly and paternally spared you. We hence see that these things are not to be referred to the hope and patience of the godly; but that God on the contrary does here denounce final destruction on the wicked, as though he had said — I bid you adieu; begone, and mind your own concerns; for I will no longer contend with you; but I shall shortly come, and ye shall find me very different from what I have been to you hitherto. We now see that God, as it were, repudiates the Jews, and threatens that he would come to them with a drawn sword; and at the same time he compares himself to a savage and cruel wild beast.

He afterwards adds — *For my judgment is*; that is, I have decreed to *gather all nations*. We have elsewhere spoken of this verb אָסַף, *asaph*; it is the same in Hebrew as the French *trousser*. It is then my purpose to gather, that is, to heap together into one mass *all nations*, to *assemble the kingdoms*, so that no corner of the earth may escape my hand. But he speaks of all nations and kingdoms, that the Jews might understand that his judgment could no longer be deferred; for if a comparison be made between them and the heathen nations, judgment, as it is written, is wont to begin with the house of God, ^{<600417>} 1 Peter 4:17; and further, they were less excusable than the unbelieving, who went astray, which is nothing strange, in darkness, for they were without the light of truth. God then threatens nations and kingdoms, that the Jews might know that a most dreadful punishment was impending over their heads, for they had surpassed all others in wickedness and evil deeds. ^{f45} He afterwards adds

<360309> ZEPHANIAH 3:9

9. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.

9. Certe tunc convertam ad populos labium purum, ut invocent omnes nomen Jehovae, ut serviant ei humero uno.

The Prophet now mitigates the asperity of his doctrine, which might have greatly terrified the godly; nay, it might have wholly disheartened them, had no consolation been applied. God then moderates here what he had previously threatened; for if the Prophet had only said this — My purpose is to gather all the nations, and thus the whole earth shall be devoured by the fire of indignation, what could the faithful have concluded but that they were to perish with the rest of the world? It was therefore necessary to add something to inspire hope, such as we find here.

We must at the same time bear in mind what I have reminded you of elsewhere — that the Prophet directs his discourse one while to the faithful only, who were then few in number, and that at another time he addresses the multitude indiscriminately; and so when our Prophet threatens, he regards the whole body of the people; but when he proclaims the favor of God, it is the same as though he turned his eyes towards the faithful only, and gathered them into a place by themselves. As for instance, when a few among a people are really wise, and the whole multitude unite in hastening their own ruin, he who has an address to make will make a distinction between the vast multitude and the few; he will severely reprove those who are thus foolish, and live for their own misery; and he will afterwards shape his discourse so as to suit those with whom he has not so much fault to find. Thus also the Lord changes his discourse; for at one time he addresses the ungodly, and at another he turns to the elect, who were but a remnant. So the Prophet has hitherto spoken by reproofs and threatening, for he addressed the whole body of the people; but now he collects, as I have said, the remnant as it were by themselves, and sets before them the hope of pardon and of salvation.

Hence he says, *But then*^{f46} (for I take כִּי, *ki*, as an adversative) *will I turn to the people a pure lip*. God intimates that he would propagate his grace wider, after having cleansed the earth; for he will be worshipped not only in Judea, but by foreign nations, and even by the remotest. For it might have been objected, Will God then extinguish his name in the world? For what will be the state of things when Judea is overthrown and other nations destroyed, except that God's name will be exposed to reproach! It will nowhere be invoked, and all will outvie one another in blasphemies against him. The Prophet meets this objection, and says, that God has in his own hand the means by which he will vindicate his own glory; for he

will not only defend his Church in Judea, but will also gather into it nations far and wide, so that his name shall be everywhere celebrated.

But he speaks first of a pure lip, *I will turn*, he says, *to the nations a pure lip*. By this word he means, that the invocation of God's name is his peculiar work; for men do not pray through the suggestion of the flesh, but when God draws them. It is indeed true, that God has ever been invoked by all nations; but it was not the right way of praying, when they heedlessly cast their petitions into the air: and we also know, that the true God was not invoked by the nations; for there was no nation then in the world which had not formed for itself some idol. As then the earth was full of innumerable idols, God was not invoked except in Judea only. Besides, though the unbelieving had an intention to pray to God, yet they could not have prayed rightly, for prayer flows from faith. God then does not without reason promise, that he would turn pure lips to the nations; that is, that he would cause the nations to call on his name with pure lips. We hence then learn what I have stated — that God cannot be rightly invoked by us, until he draws us to himself; for we have profane and impure lips. In short, the beginning of prayer is from that hidden cleansing of the Spirit of which the Prophet now speaks.

But if it be God's singular gift, to turn a pure lip to the nations, it follows that faith is conferred on us by him, for both are connected together. As God then purifies the hearts of men by faith, so also he purifies their lips that his name may be rightly invoked, which would otherwise be profaned by the unbelieving. Whenever they pretend to call on God's name, it is certain that it is not done without profanation.

As to the word *all*, it is to be referred to nations, not to each individual; for it has not been that every one has called on God; but there have been some of all nations, as Paul also says in the first chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians ^{<460101>} 1 Corinthians 1:1: for in addressing the faithful, he adds, 'With all who call on the name of the Lord in every place' — that is, not only in Judea; and elsewhere he says,

'I would that men would stretch forth hands to heaven in every place.'
(^{<540208>} 1 Timothy 2:8.)

He afterwards adds, *That they may serve him with one shoulder*; that is, that they may unitedly submit to God in order to do him service; for to

serve him with the shoulder is to unite together, so as to help one another. The metaphor seems to have been derived from those who carry a burden; for except each assists, one will be overpowered, and then the burden will fall to the ground. We are said then to serve God with one shoulder when we strive by mutual consent to assist one another. And this ought to be carefully noticed, that we may know that our striving cannot be approved by God, except we have thus the same end in view, and seek also to add courage to others, and mutually to help one another. Unless then the faithful thus render mutual assistance, the Lord cannot approve of their service. ^{f47}

We now see how foolishly they talk who so much extol free-will and whatever is connected with it: for the Lord demands faith as well as other duties of religion; and he requires also from all, love and the keeping of the whole law. But he testifies here that his name cannot be invoked, as the lips of all are polluted, until he has consecrated them, cleansing by his Spirit what was before polluted: and he shows also that men will not undertake the yoke, unless he joins them together, so as to render them willing. I must not proceed farther.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since it is the principal part of our happiness, that in our pilgrimage through this world there is open to us a familiar access to thee by faith, — O grant, that we may be able to come with a pure heart to thy presence: and when our lips are polluted, O purify us by thy Spirit, so that we may not only pray to thee with the mouth, but also prove that we do this sincerely, without any dissimulation, and that we earnestly seek to spend our whole life in glorifying thy name, until being at length gathered into thy celestial kingdom, we may be truly and really united to thee, and be made partakers of that glory, which has been procured for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SIXTH

<360310> ZEPHANIAH 3:10

10. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, <i>even</i> the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.	10. Trans fluvios Ethiopiae supplicantes mihi (<i>vel</i> , supplices mei;) filia dispersorum meorum offerent munus meum (<i>hoc est</i> , mihi; <i>nam</i> [] <i>affixum accipitur loco pronominis</i> [𐤁𐤍].)
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INTERPRETERS agree not as to the meaning of this verse; for some of the Hebrews connect this with the former, as though the Prophet was still speaking of the calling of the Gentiles. But others, with whom I agree, apply this to the dispersed Jews, so that the Prophet here gives hope of that restoration, of which he had before spoken. They who understand this of the Gentiles, think that Atharai and Phorisai are proper names. But in the first place, we cannot find that any nations were so called; and then, if we receive what they say, these were not separate nations, but portions of the Ethiopians; for the Prophet does not state the fact by itself, that Atharai and Phorisai would be the worshipers of God; but after having spoken of Ethiopia, he adds these words: hence we conclude, that the Prophet means this, — that they would return into Judea from the farthest region of the Ethiopians to offer sacrifices to God. And as he mentions the daughter of the dispersion, we must understand this of the Jews, for it cannot be applied to the Ethiopians. And this promise fits in well with the former verse: for the Prophet spoke, according to what we observed yesterday, of the future calling of the Gentiles; and now he adds, the Jews would come with the Gentiles, that they might unite together, agreeing in the same faith, in the true and pure worship of the only true God. He had said, that the kingdom would be enlarged, for the Church was to be gathered from all nations: he now adds, that the elect people would be restored, after having been driven away into exile.

Hence he says, *Beyond the rivers of Ethiopia shall be my suppliants*: for עֹתָר, *otar*, means to supplicate; but it means also sometimes to be pacified, or to be propitious; and therefore some take עֹתָרִים, *otarim*, in a passive sense, they who shall be reconciled to God; as though he had said, God will at length be propitious to the miserable exiles, though they have been cast away beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: they shall yet again be God's people, for he will be reconciled to them. As David calls Him the God of his mercy, because he had found him merciful and gracious, (^{<195901>}Psalm 59:18,) so also in this place they think that the Jews are said to be the עֹתָרִי, the reconciled of Jehovah, because he would be reconciled to them. But this exposition is too forced: I therefore retain that which I have stated, — that some suppliants would come to God from the utmost parts of Ethiopia, not the Ethiopians themselves, but the Jews who had been driven there.

To the same purpose is what is added, *The daughter of my dispersed*; for פֹּזֵר, *puts*, means to scatter or to disperse.^{f48} Hence by the daughter of the dispersed he means the gathered assembly of the miserable exiles, who for a time were considered as having lost their name, so as not to be counted as the people of Israel. These then *shall again offer to me a gift*, that is, they are to be restored to their country, that they may there worship me after their usual manner. Now though this prophecy extends to the time of the Gospel, it is yet no wonder, that the Prophet describes the worship of God such as it had been, accompanied with the ceremonies of the Law. We now then perceive what Zephaniah means in this verse, — that not only the Gentiles would come into the Church of God, but that the Jews also would return to their country, that they might together make one body. It follows, —

<360311> ZEPHANIAH 3:11

11. In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain.

11. In die illo non erubescas ob omnia facta tua, quibus praevaricata es contra me; quia tunc auferam e medio tui qui exultant superbia tua; et non adijicies ad superbiendum posthac (*hoc est*, non adijicies superbire) in monte sanctitatis meae.

Here the Prophet teaches us, that the Church would be different, when God removed the dross and gathered to himself a pure and chosen people: and the Prophet stated this, that the faithful might not think it hard that God so diminished his Church that hardly the tenth part remained; for it was a sad and a bitter thing, that of a vast multitude a very few only remained. It could not then be, but that the ruin of their brethren greatly affected the Jews, though they knew them to be reprobate. We indeed see how Paul felt a sympathy, when he saw that his own nation were alienated from God. <450901> Romans 9:1. So it was necessary that some consolation should be given to the faithful, that they might patiently bear the diminution of the Church, which had been previously predicted. Hence the Prophet, that he might moderate their grief, says, that this would be for their good; for in this manner the reproaches were to be removed, by which the Jewish name had been polluted, and rendered abominable.

Thou shalt not be ashamed, he says, *for the sins by which I have been offended*. Why? For thou shalt be cleansed; for it is God's purpose to reserve a few, by whom he will be purely worshipped. Some think that he does not speak here of the remission of sins, but on the contrary, of a pure and holy life, which follows regeneration; as though he had said, "There will be no reason any more for thee to be ashamed of thy life; for when I shall chasten you, ye will then fear me, and your correction will be conducive to a newness of life: since then your life will not be the same as formerly, and since my glory shall shine forth among you, there will be no cause why ye should be ashamed." But this is a strained view, and cannot

be accommodated to the words of the Prophet; for he says, *Thou shalt no more be ashamed of the sins by which thou hast transgressed against me.* We hence see that this cannot be otherwise applied than to the remission of sins. But the last clause has led interpreters astray, for the Prophet adds, *For I will take away from the midst of thee those who exult:* but the Prophet's design, as I have stated, was different from what they have supposed; for he shows that there was no reason for the Jews to lament and deplore the diminution of the Church because the best compensation was offered to them, which was, that by this small number God would be purely served. For when the body of the people was complete, it was, we know, a mass of iniquity. How then could Israel glory in its vast number, since they were all like the giants carrying on war against God? When now God collects a few only, these few would at length acknowledge that they had been preserved in a wonderful manner, in order that religion and the true worship of God should not be extinguished in the earth.

We now perceive the Prophet's design; but I will endeavor to render this clearer by a comparison: Suppose that in a city licentiousness of life so prevails that the people may seem to be irreclaimable; when it happens that the city itself falls away from its power and pristine state, or is in some other way reformed, not without loss, and is thus led to improve its morals, this would be a compensation to the good, and would give courage to the godly and ease their grief, so that they would patiently submit, though the city had not the same abundance, nor the same wealth and enjoyments. How so? because they who remained would form a body of people free from reproach and disgrace. When disease is removed from the human body, the body itself is necessarily weakened; and it is sometimes necessary to amputate a member, that the whole body may be preserved. In this case there is a grievous diminution, but as there is no other way of preserving the body, the remedy ought to be patiently sustained. In a similar manner does the Prophet now speak of the city Jerusalem: *Thou shalt not be ashamed of the sins by which thou hast transgressed against me.* How so? Because they were to be separated from the profane and gross despisers of God; for as long as the good and the evil were mixed together, it was a reproach common to all. Jerusalem was then a den of robbers; it was, as it were, a hell on earth; and all were alike exposed to the same infamy, for the pure part could not be distinguished, as a mass of evil prevailed everywhere. The Prophet now says, Thou shalt not be ashamed

of thy former infamy. Why? “Because God will separate the chaff from the wheat, and will gather the wheat; ye shall be, as it were, in the storehouse of God; the chosen seed shall alone remain; there will be such purity, that the glory of the Lord shall shine forth among you: ye shall not therefore be ashamed of the disgraceful deeds by which ye are now contaminated.”

We now apprehend the meaning of the words. But it may seem strange that the Prophet should say, that sins should be covered by oblivion, which the Jews ought indeed to have thought of often and almost at all times, according to what Ezekiel says,

‘Thou wilt then remember thy ways, and be ashamed,’
(^{<263606>} Ezekiel 36:61)

that is, when God shall be pacified. Ezekiel says, that the fruit of repentance would be, that the faithful, covered with shame, would condemn themselves. Why so? Because the reprobate proceed in their wicked courses, as it were, with closed eyes, and as it has been previously said, they know no shame: though God charges them with their sins, they yet despise and reject every warning with a shameless front; yea, they kick against the goads. Since it is so, justly does Ezekiel say, that shame would be the fruit of true repentance, according to what Paul also says in the sixth chapter to the Romans ^{<450601>} Romans 6:1, “Of which ye are now ashamed.” He intimates, that when they were sunk in their unbelief, they were so given to shameful deeds, that they perceived not their abomination. They began therefore to be ashamed, when they became illuminated. The Prophet seems now to cut off this fruit from repentance: but what he says ought to be otherwise understood, that is, that the Church would be then free from reproach; for the reprobate would be separated, all the filth would be taken away, when God gathered only the remnant for himself; for in this manner, as it has been said, the wheat would be separated from the chaff. *Thou shalt not then be ashamed in that day of evil deeds; for I will take away from the midst of thee those who exult.* He shows how necessary the diminution would be; for all must have perished, had not God cut off the putrid members. How severe soever then and full of pain the remedy would be, it ought yet to be deemed tolerable; for the Church, that is the body, could not otherwise be preserved.

But it may be again objected — That the Church is cleansed from all spots, inasmuch as the reprobate are taken away; for he says, *Thou shalt not be ashamed of the evil deeds by which thou hast sinned*, literally, *against me*, that is, by which thou hast transgressed against me. God here addresses, it may be said, the faithful themselves: He then does not speak of the evil deeds of those whom the Lord had rejected. But the answer is easy: When he says, that the Church had sinned, he refers to that mixture, by which no distinction is made between the wheat and the chaff. We may say that a city is impious and wicked, when the majority so much exceeds in number the good, that they do not appear. When therefore among ten thousand men there are only thirty or even a smaller number who are anxious for a better state of things, the whole number will be generally counted wicked on account of the larger portion, for the others are hid, and, as it were, covered over and buried. Justly then and correctly does Zephaniah declare, that the Jews had transgressed against God; for in that mixed multitude the elect could not have been distinguished from the reprobate. But he now promises that there would be a distinction, when God took away the proud, who exulted in vain boasting. For he says, *I will take away from the midst of thee those who exult in thy pride*.

Some render the word in the abstract, the exultations of thy pride: but the term **עליזים**, found here, is never in construction rendered exultations. It is therefore no doubt to be understood of men. He then names the pride of the people; and yet he addresses the elect, who were afterwards to be gathered. What does this mean? even what we have already stated, that before the Church was cleansed from her pollution and filth, there was a common exultation and insolence against God; for these words were everywhere heard —

“We are God’s holy people, we are a chosen race, we are a royal priesthood, we are a holy inheritance.” Ezra 19:6.

Since, then, these boastings were in the mouth of them all, the Prophet says, that it was the pride of the whole people. *I will then take away*, he says, *from the midst of thee those who exult in thy pride*.^{f49}

He afterwards adds, *Thou shalt no more add to take pride in my holy mountain*. Here the Prophet points out the main spring of the evil, because the Jews had hardened themselves in a perverse self-confidence, as they thought that all things were lawful for them, inasmuch as they were God’s

chosen people. Jeremiah also in a similar manner represents their boasting as false, when they pretended to be the temple of God. ^{<240704>} Jeremiah 7:4. So our Prophet condemns this pride, because they concealed their sins under the shadow of the temple, and thought it a sufficient defense, that God dwelt on Mount Sion. To show, then, that the people were unhealable, without being cleansed from this pride, the Prophet says, *I will take away those who exult* — How did they exult? *in thy pride*: and what was this pride? that they inhabited the holy mount of God, besides which there was no other sanctuary of God on earth. As then they imagined that God was thus bound to them, they insolently despised all admonitions, as though they were exempt from every law and restraint. *Thou shalt not then add to take pride in my holy mountain.*

We now then see how careful we ought to be, lest the favors of God, which ought by their brightness to guide us to heaven, should darken our minds. But as we are extremely prone to arrogance and pride, we ought carefully to seek to conduct ourselves in a meek and humble manner, when favored with God's singular benefits; for when we begin falsely to glory in God's name, and to put on an empty mask to cover our sins, it is all over with us; inasmuch as to our wickedness, to our contempt of God, and to other evil lusts and passions, there is added perverseness, for we persevere in our course, as it were, with an iron and inflexible neck. Thus, indeed, it happens to all hypocrites, who elate themselves through false pretenses as to their connection with God. It follows —

<360312> ZEPHANIAH 3:12, 13

12. I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD.

12. Et residuum faciam in medio tui populum afflictum et pauperem; et sperabunt in nomine Iehovae.

13. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make *them* afraid.

13. Residuum Israel non perpetrabunt iniquitatem (*hoc est, reliquae; ad verbum est, residuum; sed quia nomen est collectivum, ideo mutatur numerus.*) et non loquentur mendacium, et non inveniatur in ore ipsorum lingua dolosa (*vel, lingua fraudis;*) quoniam ipsi pascentur et accubabunt; et nemo erit exterrens.

Here the Prophet pursues the same subject — that God would provide for the safety of his Church, by cutting off the majority of the people, and by reserving a few; for his purpose was to gather for himself a pure and holy Church, as the city had previously been full of all uncleanness. It ought, then, to have been a compensation to ease their grief, when the godly saw that God would be propitious to them, though he had treated them with great severity. And we must bear in mind what I have before stated — that the Church could not have been preserved without correcting and subduing that arrogance, which arose from a false profession as to God. Zephaniah takes it now as granted, that pride could not be torn away from their hearts, except they were wholly cast down, and thus made contrite. He then teaches us, that as long as they remained whole, they were ever proud, and that hence it was necessary to apply a violent remedy, that they might learn meekness and humility; which he intimates when he says, *that the residue of the people would be humble and afflicted*; for if they had become willingly teachable, there would have been no need of so severe a correction. In short, though the faithful lament that God should thus almost annihilate his Church, yet in order that they might not murmur, he shows that this was a necessary remedy. How so? because they would have always conducted themselves arrogantly against God, had they not

been afflicted. It was, therefore, needful for them to be in a manner broken, because they could not be bent. *I will*, then, he says, *make the residue an afflicted and a poor people*.

The word, עני, *oni*, means humble; but as he adds the word דל, *dal*, he no doubt shows that the Jews could not be corrected without being stripped of all the materials of their glorying.^{f50} They were, indeed, extremely wedded to their boastings; yea, they were become hardened in their contempt of God. He therefore says, that this fruit would at last follow, that they would *trust in the Lord*, that is, when he had laid them prostrate.

This verse contains a most useful instruction: for first we are taught that the Church is subdued by the cross, that she may know her pride, which is so innate and so fixed in the hearts of men, that it cannot be removed, except the Lord, so to speak, roots it out by force. There is then no wonder that the faithful are so much humbled by the Lord, and that the lot of the Church is so contemptible; for if they had more vigor, they would soon, as is often the case, break out into an insolent spirit. That the Lord, then, may keep his elect under restraint, he subdues and tames them by poverty. In short, he exercises them under the cross. This is one thing.

We must also notice the latter clause, when he says, *They shall trust in the Lord*, that is, those who have been reduced to poverty and want. We hence see for what purpose God deprives us of all earthly trust, and takes away from us every ground of glorying; it is, that we may rely only on his favor. This dependence ought not, indeed, to be extorted from us, for what can be more desirable than to trust in God? But while men arrogate to themselves more than what is right, and thus put themselves in the place of God, they cannot really and sincerely trust in him. They indeed imagine that they trust in God, when they ascribe to him a part of their salvation; but except this be done wholly, no trust can be placed in God. It is hence necessary that they who ascribe to themselves even the smallest thing, should be reduced to nothing: and this is what the Prophet means. Let us further know, that men do not profit under God's scourges, except they wholly deny themselves, and forget their own power, which they falsely imagine, and recomb on him alone.

But the Prophet speaks of the elect alone; for we see that many are severely afflicted, and are not softened, nor do they put off their former hardihood. But the Lord so chastises his people, that by the spirit of

meekness he corrects in them all pride and haughtiness. But by saying, *They shall trust in the name of Jehovah*, he sets this trust in contrast with the pride which he had previously condemned. They indeed wished to appear to trust in the name of God, when they boasted of Mount Sion, and haughtily brought forward the adoption by which they had been separated from heathen nations; but it was a false boasting, which had no trust in it. To trust, then, in the name of Jehovah is nothing else than sincerely to embrace the favor which he offers in his word, and not to make vain pretenses, but to call on him with a pure heart and with a deep feeling of penitence.

For the same purpose he adds, *The residue of Israel shall no more work iniquity nor speak falsehood; nor shall there be found a deceitful tongue in their mouth*. The Prophet continues the same subject — that the Church is not to be less esteemed when it consists only of a few men; for in the vast number there was great filth, which not only polluted the earth by its ill savor, but infected heaven itself. Since then Jerusalem was full of iniquities, as long as the people remained entire, the Prophet adduces this comfort, that there was no reason for sorrow, if from a vast number as the sand of the sea, and from a great multitude like the stars, God would only collect a small band; for by this means the Church would be cleansed. And it was of great importance that the filth should be cleansed from God's sanctuary; for what could have been more disgraceful than that the holy place should be made the lodging of swine, and that the place which God designed to be consecrated to himself, should be profaned? As then Jerusalem was the sanctuary of God, ought not true religion to have flourished there? But when it became polluted with every kind of filth, the Prophet shows that it ought not to have seemed grievous that the Lord should take away that vast multitude which falsely boasted that they professed his name. *They shall not then work iniquity*.

Under one kind of expression he includes the whole of a righteous life, when he says, *They shall not speak falsely, nor will there be found a deceitful tongue*. It is indeed sufficient for the practice of piety or integrity of life to keep the tongue free from frauds and falsehood; but as it cannot be that any one will abstain from all frauds and falsehood, except he purely and from the heart fears God, the Prophet, by including the whole under one thing, expresses under the word tongue what embraces complete holiness of life.

It may be now asked, whether this has ever been fulfilled. It is indeed certain, that though few returned to their own country, there were yet many hypocrites among that small number; for as soon as the people reached their own land, every one, as we find, was so bent on his own advantages, that they polluted themselves with heathen connections, that they neglected the building of the temple, and deprived the priests of their tenths, that they became cold in the worship of God. With these things they were charged by Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Since these things were so, what means this promise, that there would be no iniquity when God had cleansed his Church? The Prophet speaks comparatively; for the Lord would so cleanse away the spots from his people that their holiness would then appear more pure. Though then many hypocrites were still mixed with the good and real children of God, it was yet true that iniquity was not so prevalent, that frauds and falsehood were not so rampant among the people as they were before.

He afterwards adds, *For they shall feed and lie down, and there will be none to terrify them.* He mentions another benefit from God — that he will protect his people from all wrongs when they had repented. We must ever bear in mind what I have stated — that the Prophet intended here to heal the sorrow of the godly, which might have otherwise wholly dejected their minds. That he might then in some measure alleviate the grief of God's children, he brings forward this argument — “Though few shall remain, it is yet well that the Lord will cleanse away the filth of the holy city, that it may be justly deemed to be God's habitation, which was before the den of thieves. It is not then a loss to you, that few will dwell in the holy land, for God will be a faithful guardian of your safety. What need then is there of a large multitude, except to render you safe from enemies and from wild beasts? What does it signify, if God receives you under his protection, under the condition that ye shall be secure, though not able to resist your enemies? Though one cannot defend another, yet if God be your protector, and ye be made to live in peace under the defense which he promises, there is no reason why ye should say, that you have suffered a great loss, when your great number was made small. It is then enough for you to live under God's guardianship; for though the whole world were united against you, and ye had no strength nor defense yourselves, yet the Lord can preserve you; *there will be no one to terrify you.*

And this argument is taken from the law; for it is mentioned among other blessings, that God would render safe the life of his people; which is an invaluable blessing, and without which the life of men, we know, must be miserable; for nothing is more distressing than constant fear, and nothing is more conducive to happiness than a quiet life: and hence to live in quietness and free from all fear, is what the Lord promises as a chief blessing to his people.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since the depravity of our nature is so great, that we cannot bear prosperity without some wantonness of the flesh immediately raging in us, and without becoming even arrogant against thee, — O grant, that we may profit under the trials of the cross; and when thou have blest us, may we with lowly hearts, renouncing our perverseness, submit ourselves to thee, and not only bear thy yoke submissively, but proceed in this obedience all our life, and so contend against all temptations as never to glory in ourselves, and feel also convinced, that all true and real glory is laid up for us in thee, until we shall enjoy it in thy celestial kingdom, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVENTH

<360314> ZEPHANIAH 3:14, 15

14. Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.

14. Exulta filia Sion (*vel*, jubila; exulta Israel; gaude et exulta toto corde filia Ierusalem.

15. The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, *even* the LORD, *is* in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.

15. Abstulit Iehova judicia tua, purgando avertit inimicos tuos; rex Israel Iehova in medio tui; non videbis malum amplius.

THE Prophet confirms what he has been teaching, and encourages the faithful to rejoice, as though he saw with his eyes what he had previously promised. For thus the Prophets, while encouraging the faithful to entertain hope, stimulate them to testify their gratitude, as though God's favor was already enjoyed. It is certain, that this instruction was set before the Jews for this purpose, — that in their exile and extreme distress they might yet prepare themselves to give thanks to God, as though they were already, as they say, in possession of what they had prayed for. But we must remember the design of our Prophet, and the common mode of proceeding which all the Prophets followed; for the faithful are exhorted to praise God the same as if they had already enjoyed his blessings, which yet were remote, and seemed concealed from their view.

We now then perceive what the Prophet meant in encouraging the Jews to praise God: he indeed congratulates them as though they were already enjoying that happiness, which was yet far distant: but as it is a congratulation only, we must also bear in mind, that God deals so bountifully with his Church as to stimulate the faithful to gratitude; for we pollute all his benefits, except we return for them, as it has been stated elsewhere, the sacrifice of praise: and as a confirmation of this is the repetition found here, which would have otherwise appeared superfluous.

“Exult, daughter of Sion, shout, be glad; rejoice with all thine heart, daughter of Jerusalem.”^{f51}

But the Prophet was not thus earnest without reason; for he saw how difficult it was to console the afflicted, especially when God manifested no evidence of hope according to the perception of the flesh; but his purpose was by this heap of words to fortify them, that they might with more alacrity struggle with so many hard and severe trials.

He then adds, that God had *taken away the judgments* of Zion. By judgments, he means those punishments which would have been inflicted if it had been the Lord’s purpose to deal according to strict justice with the Jews, as when any one says in our language, *J’ai brulé tous tes proces*. He intimates then that God would no more make an enquiry as to the sins of his people. The word מִשְׁפַּח, *meshiphath*, we know, has various meanings in Hebrew; but in this place, as I have said, it means what we call in French, *Toutes procédures*. In short, God declares that the sins of his people are buried, so that he in a manner cuts off his character as a judge, and remits his own right, so that he will no more contend with the Jews, or summon them, as they say, to trial. *Jehovah* then *will take away thy judgments*.^{f52}

Then follows an explanation, *By clearing he has turned aside all enemies*; ^{f53} for we know that war is one of God’s judgments. As then God had punished the Jews by the Assyrians, by the Egyptians, by the Chaldeans, and by other heathen nations, he says now, that all enemies would be turned away. It hence follows, that neither the Assyrians nor the Chaldeans had assailed them merely through their own inclination, but that they were, according to what has been elsewhere stated, the swords, as it were, of God.

It afterwards follows, *The king of Israel is Jehovah in the midst of thee*. Here the Prophet briefly shows, that the sum of real and true happiness is then possessed, when God declares, that he undertakes the care of his people. God is said to be in the midst of us, when he testifies that we live under his guardianship and protection. Properly speaking, he never forsakes his own; but these forms of speech, we know, are to be referred to the perception of the flesh. When the Lord is said to be afar off, or to dwell in the midst of us, it is to be understood with reference to our ideas: for we think God to be then absent when he gives liberty to our enemies, and we

seem to be exposed as a prey to them; but God is said to dwell in the midst of us when he protects us by his power, and turns aside all assaults. Thus, then, our Prophet now says, that God will be in the midst of his Church; for he would really and effectually prove that he is the guardian of his elect people. He had been indeed for a time absent, when his people were deprived of all help, according to what Moses expresses when he says, that the people had denuded themselves, because they had renounced God, by whose hand they had been safely protected, and were also to be protected to the end. <023225> Exodus 32:25.

He lastly adds, *Thou shalt not see evil*. Some read, “Thou shalt not fear evil,” by inserting ך, *iod*; but the meaning is the same: for the verb, to see, in Hebrew is, we know, often to be taken in the sense of finding or experiencing. *Thou shalt* then *see no evil*; that is, God will cause thee to live in quietness, free from every disturbance. If the other reading, Thou shalt not fear evil, be preferred, then the reference is to the blessing promised in the law; for nothing is more desirable than peace and tranquillity. Since then this is the chief of temporal blessings, the Prophet does not without reason say, that the Church would be exempt from all fear and anxiety, when God should dwell in the midst of it, according to what he says in <194601> Psalm 46:1. It now follows —

<360316> ZEPHANIAH 3:16, 17	
16. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack.	16. In die illa dicitur Jerosolymae, Ne timeas; Sion, ne pigrescant (<i>vel</i> , solvantur, <i>name</i> [רַפָּה] <i>significat</i> lentum esse, <i>vel</i> , remissum, <i>vel</i> , dissolutum; ne <i>ergo</i> pigrescant) manus tuae.
17. The LORD thy God in the midst of thee <i>is</i> mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.	17. Iehova Deus tuus in medio tui fortis servabit; exultabit (<i>vel</i> , gaudebit) super te in laetitia; quiescet (<i>silebit ad verbum</i> , <i>vel</i> , quietus erit) in amore suo; exultabit super te cum jubilatione.

The Prophet proceeds still to confirm the same truth, but employs a different mode of speaking. It shall, he says, be then said everywhere to Zion, *Fear not, let not thine hands be let down*, etc. For these words may no less suitably be applied to the common report or applause of all men, then to the prophetic declaration; so that the expression, It shall be said, may be the common congratulation, which all would vie to offer. The import of the whole is, that Jerusalem would be so tranquil that either the Prophets, or all with common consent would say, “Thou enjoyest thy rest: for God really shows that he cares for thee; there is therefore no cause for thee hereafter to fear.” For there is expressed here a real change: since the Jews had been before in daily fear, the Prophet intimates, that they would be so safe from every danger, as to be partakers of the long-wished-for rest, with the approbation even of the whole world. Hence, it shall be said — by whom? either by the Prophets, or by common report: it makes no great difference, whether there would be teachers to announce their state joyful and prosperous, or whether all men would, by common consent, applaud God’s favor, when he had removed from his people all wars, troubles, and fears, so as to make them live in quietness.

It shall then be said to Jerusalem, fear not; Sion! let not thine hands be relaxed. By saying Fear not, and let not thine hands be relaxed, he intimates, that all vigor is so relaxed by fear, that no member can perform its function. But by taking a part for the whole, he understands by the word hands, every other part of the body; for by the hands men perform their works. Hence in Scripture the hands often signify the works of men. The meaning then is — that God’s Church would then be in such a state of quietness as to be able to discharge all its duties and transact its concerns peaceably and orderly. And it is what we also know by experience, that when fear prevails in our hearts we are as it were lifeless, so that we cannot raise even a finger to do anything: but when hope animates us, there is a vigor in the whole body, so that alacrity appears everywhere. The Prophet, no doubt, means here, that God thus succors his elect, not that they may indulge in pleasures, as is too often the case, but that they may, on the contrary, strenuously devote themselves to the performance of their duties. We ought therefore to notice the connection between a tranquil state and diligent hands; for, as I have said, God does not free us from all trouble and fear, that we may grow torpid in our pleasures, but that we

may, on the contrary, be more attentive to our duty. *Sion*, then! *let thine hands be no more torpid* — Why?

Jehovah, he says, *in the midst of thee strong, will save*. He repeats what he had said, but more fully expresses what might have appeared obscure on account of its brevity. He therefore shows here more at large the benefit of God's presence — that God will not dwell idly in his Church, but will be accompanied with his power. For what end? To save. We hence see that the word גְבוּר, *gebur*, ascribed to God, is very emphatical; as though he had said, that God would not be idle while residing in the midst of his Church, but would become its evident strength. And it is worthy of notice, that God exhibits not himself as strong that he may terrify his elect, but only that he may become their preserver.

He afterwards adds, *He will rejoice over thee with gladness*. This must be referred to the gratuitous love of God, by which he embraces and cherishes his Church, as a husband his wife whom he most tenderly loves. Such feelings, we know, belong not to God; but this mode of speaking, which often occurs in Scripture, is thus to be understood by us; for as God cannot otherwise show his favor towards us and the greatness of his love, he compares himself to a husband, and us to a wife. He means in short — that God is most highly pleased when he can show himself kind to his Church.

He confirms and shows again the same thing more clearly, *He will be at rest* (or silent) *in his love*. The proper meaning of חֶרֶשׁ, *charesh*, is to be silent, but it means here to be at rest. The import is, that God will be satisfied, as we say in French, *Il prendra tout son contentement*; as though he had said that God wished nothing more than sweetly and quietly to cherish his Church. As I have already said, this feeling is indeed ascribed to God with no strict correctness; for we know that he can instantly accomplish whatever it pleases him: but he assumes the character of men; for except he thus speaks familiarly with us, he cannot fully show how much he loves us. God then shall be at rest in his love; that is, “It will be his great delight, it will be the chief pleasure of thy God when he cherishes thee: as when one cherishes a wife most dear to him, so God will then rest in his love.” *He then says, He will exult over thee with joy.*^{f54}

These hyperbolic terms seem indeed to set forth something inconsistent, for what can be more alien to God's glory than to exult like man when

influenced by joy arising from love? It seems then that the very nature of God repudiates these modes of speaking, and the Prophet appears as though he had removed God from his celestial throne to the earth. A heathen poet says, —

*Not well do agree, nor dwell on the same throne,
Majesty and love. (Ovid. Met. Lib. 2: 816-7.)*

God indeed represents himself here as a husband, who burns with the greatest love towards his wife; and this does not seem, as we have said, to be suitable to his glory; but whatever tends to this end — to convince us of God's ineffable love towards us, so that we may rest in it, and being weaned as it were from the world, may seek this one thing only, that he may confer on us his favor — whatever tends to this, doubtless illustrates the glory of God, and derogates nothing from his nature. We at the same time see that God, as it were, humbles himself; for if it be asked whether these things are suitable to the nature of God, we must say, that nothing is more alien to it. It may then appear by no means congruous, that God should be described by us as a husband who burns with love to his wife: but we hence more fully learn, as I have already said, how great is God's favor towards us, who thus humbles himself for our sake, and in a manner transforms himself, while he puts on the character of another. Let every one of us come home also to himself, and acknowledge how deep is the root of unbelief; for God cannot provide for our good and correct this evil, to which we are all subject, without departing as it were from himself, that he might come nigher to us.

And whenever we meet with this mode of speaking, we ought especially to remember, that it is not without reason that God labors so much to persuade us of his love, because we are not only prone by nature to unbelief, but exposed to the deceits of Satan, and are also inconstant and easily drawn away from his word: hence it is that he assumes the character of man. We must, at the same time, observe what I have before stated — that whatever is calculated to set forth the love of God, does not derogate from his glory; for his chief glory is that vast and ineffable goodness by which he has once embraced us, and which he will show us to the end.

What the Prophet says of *that day* is to be extended to the whole kingdom of Christ. He indeed speaks of the deliverance of the people; but we must ever bear in mind what I have already stated — that it is not one year, or a

few years, which are intended, when the Prophets speak of future redemption; for the time which is now mentioned began when the people were restored from the Babylonian captivity, and continues its course to the final advent of Christ. And hence also we learn that these hyperbolic expressions are not extravagant, when the Prophets say, Thou shalt not afterwards fear, nor see evil: for if we regard the dispersion of that people, doubtless no trial, however heavy, can happen to us, which is not moderate, when we compare our lot with the state of the ancient people; for the land of Canaan was then the only pledge of God's favor and love. When, therefore, the Jews were ejected from their inheritance, it was, as we have said elsewhere, a sort of repudiation; it was the same as if a father were to eject from his house a son, and to repudiate him. Christ was not as yet manifested to the world. The miserable Jews had an evidence, in figures and shadows, of that future favor which was afterwards manifested by the gospel. Since, then, God gave them so small an evidence of his love, how could it be otherwise but that they must have fainted, when driven far away from their land? Though the Church is now scattered and torn, and seems little short of being ruined, yet God is ever present with us in his only-begotten Son: we have also the gate of the celestial kingdom fully opened. There is, therefore, administered to us at all times more abundant reasons for joy than formerly to the ancient people, especially when they seemed to have been rejected by God. This is the reason why the Prophet says, that the Church would be lessened by calamities, when God again gathered it. But that redemption of the people of Israel ought at this day to be borne in mind by us; for it was a memorable work of God, by which he intended to afford a perpetual testimony that he is the deliverer of all those who hope in him. It follows —

<360318> **ZEPHANIAH 3:18**

18. I will gather *them that are* sorrowful for the solemn assembly, *who* are of thee, *to whom* the reproach of it was a burden.

18. Afflictos a tempore (*vel, pro tempore, vel, ad tempus, ut alii vertunt*) congregabo qui ex te erunt: onus (*vertunt quidam, sed active accipere Propheta potius, qui sistinuerunt ergo*) super eam opprobrium.

He proceeds here with the same subject, but in different words; for except some consolation had been introduced, what the Prophet has hitherto said would have been frigid; for he had promised them joy, he had exhorted the chosen of God to offer praise and thanksgiving; but they were at the same time in a most miserable state. It was hence necessary to add this declaration respecting the exiles being gathered.

But he says *at the time*. Some read, in respect to time; but this is obscure and strained. Others render it, at the time; but it means strictly from the time; though מֵעַתָּה, *mem*, may sometimes be rendered as a particle of comparison. Interpreters do not seem to me rightly to understand the Prophet's meaning: for I do not doubt but that he points out here the fixed time of deliverance, as though he had said, I will again gather thine afflicted, and those who have endured thy reproach. When? at the time, מְמוּעַד, *memuod*; that is, at the determined or fixed time: for מוֹעֵד, *muod*, is not taken in Hebrew for time simply, but for a predetermined time, as we say in French, *Un terme prefix*. *I will then gather thine afflicted*, but not soon. Our Prophet then holds the faithful here somewhat in suspense, that they might continue in their watch tower, and patiently wait for God's help; for we know how great is our haste, and how we run headlong when we hope for anything; but this celerity, according to the old proverb, is often delay to us. Since, then, men are always carried away by a certain heat, or by too much impetuosity, to lay hold on what may happen, the Prophet here lays a restraint, and intimates that God has his own seasons to fulfill what he has promised, that he will not do so soon, nor according to the will of men, but when the suitable time shall come. And this time is that which he has appointed, not what we desire.

He then adds, *Who have sustained reproach for her*. In this second clause the Prophet no doubt repeats the same thing; but at the same time he points out, not without reason, their condition — that the Jews suffered reproach and contumely at the time of their exile, and that on account of being the Church; that is, because they professed to worship their own God; for on account of his name the Jews were hated by all nations, inasmuch as their religion was different from the superstitions of all heathens. It could not hence be, but that the unbelieving should vex them with many reproaches, when they were carried away into exile, and scattered in all directions. ^{f55}

He had said before, I will gather the afflicted; but he now adds, I will gather those who have sustained reproach. I have stated that some read, A burden upon her is reproach; but no sense can be elicited from such words. The Prophet does here no doubt obviate a temptation which awaited God's children, who would have to experience in exile what was most grievous to be borne; for they were to be exposed to the taunts and ridicule of all nations. Hence he seasonably heals their grief by saying, that though for a time they would be laughed at by the ungodly, they would yet return to their own country; for the Lord had resolved to gather them. But we must ever remember what I have said — that God would do this in his own time, when he thought it seasonable. It follows —

<div><360319>ZEPHANIAH3:19</div>	
<div>19. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.</div>	<div>19. Ecce ego conficiens omnes oppressores tuos (qui te humiliant, ad verbum) in tempore illo; et servabo claudicantem, et reducam expulsam ad faciendum eos in laudem et nomen in terra opprobrii ipsorum.</div>

He confirms here what I have referred to in the last verse that God would overcome all obstacles, when his purpose was to restore his people. On this the Prophet, as we have said, dwells, that the Jews might in their exile sustain themselves with the hope of deliverance. As, then, they could not instantly conceive what was so incredible according to the perceptions of the flesh, he testifies that there is sufficient power in God to subdue all enemies.

At that time, he says, he repeats what had been stated before — that his people must wait as long as God pleases to exercise them under the cross; for if their option had been given to the Jews, they would have willingly continued at their ease; and we know how men are wont to exempt themselves from every trouble, fear, and sorrow. As therefore men naturally desire rest and immunity from all evil, the Prophet here exhorts the faithful to patience, and shows, that it cannot be that God will become

their deliverer, except they submit to his chastisement; at that time then. It is ever to be observed, that the Prophet condemns that extreme haste which usually takes hold of men when God chastises them. However slowly then and gradually God proceeds in the work of delivering his own, the Prophet shows here, that there was no reason for them to despair, or to be broken down in their spirits. ^{f56}

He then subjoins, that he would *save the halting, and restore the driven away*. By these words he means, that though the Church would be maimed and torn, there would yet be nothing that could hinder God to restore her: for by the halting and the driven away he understands none other than one so stripped of power as wholly to fail in himself. He therefore compares the Church of God to a person, who, with relaxed limbs, is nearly dead. Hence, when we are useless as to any work, what else is our life but a languor like to death? But the Prophet declares here, that the seasonable time would come when God would relieve his own people: though they were to become prostrate and fallen, though they were to be scattered here and there, like a torn body of man, an arm here and a leg there, every limb separated; yet he declares that nothing could possibly prevent God to gather his Church and restore it to its full vigor and strength. In short, he means that the restoration of the Church would be a kind of resurrection; for the Lord would humble his people until they became almost lifeless, so as not to be able to breathe: but he would at length gather them, and so gather them that they would not only breathe but be replenished with such new vigor as though they had received no loss. I cannot finish the whole today.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are at this day so scattered on account of our sins, and even they who seem to be collected in thy name and under thy authority, are yet so torn by mutual discords, that the safety of thy Church hangs as it were on a thread, while in the meantime thine enemies seem with savage cruelty to destroy all those who are thine, and to obliterate thy gospel, — O grant, that we may live in quietness and resignation, hoping in thy promises, so that we may not doubt, but that thou in due time will become our deliverer: and may we so patiently bear to be afflicted and cast down by thee, that we may ever raise up our groans to heaven so

as to be heard through the name of thy Son, until being at length freed from every contest, we shall enjoy that blessed rest which is laid up for us in heaven, and which thine only begotten Son has procured for us. Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-EIGHTH

WE stopped yesterday at the latter clause of the last verse but one of the Prophet Zephaniah, where God promises that the Jews, who had been before not only obscure, but also exposed to all kinds of reproaches, would again become illustrious; for to give them for a name and for a praise, is no other thing than to render them celebrated, that they might be, as they say, in the mouth of every one.

And he says, *in the land of their shame*, or reproach; for they had been a mockery everywhere; as the unbelieving thought that they deluded themselves with a vain hope, because they boasted that God, under whose protection they lived, would be their perpetual guardian, though they were driven away into exile. Hence an occasion for taunt and ridicule was given. But a change for the better is here promised; for all in Assyria and Chaldea would have to see that this was a people chosen by God; so that there would be a remarkable testimony among all nations, that all who trust in God are by no means disappointed, for they find that he is faithful in his promises. The last verse follows —

<360320> ZEPHANIAH 3:20

20. At that time will I bring you *again*, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.

20. In tempore illo reducam vos, in tempore illo colligam vos; quia ponam vos in nomen et laudem per cunctos populos terrae, (*vel*, inter cunctos populos terrae,) quam reducam captivitates vestras in oculis vestris, dicit Jehova.

He repeats the same things, with some change in the words; and not without reason, because no one of then thought that the Jews, who were cast as it were into the grave, would ever come forth again, and especially, that they would be raised unto such dignity and unto so elevated an honor., As ten this was not probable, that Prophet confirms his prediction — *I will restore you, says God, I will gather you, even because I have given you*

a name; that is, it is my resolved and fixed purpose to render you celebrated: but here again are laid down the words we have already noticed.

He afterwards adds — *When I shall restore your captivities*. The plural number is to be noticed; and not rightly nor prudently is what has been done by many interpreters, who have rendered the word in the singular number; for the Prophet mentions captivities designedly, as the Jews had not only been driven into exile, but had also been scattered through various countries, so that they were not one captive people, but many troops of captives. Hence his purpose was to obviate a doubt; for it would not have been enough that one captivity should be restored, except all who had been dispersed were collected into one body by the wonderful power of God. And hence he adds before your eyes, that the Jews might be convinced that they should be eye-witnesses of this miracle, which yet they could hardly conceive, without raising up their thoughts above the world.

A TRANSLATION OF

CALVIN'S VERSION OF

THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH.

CHAPTER 1.

- 1 THE word of Jehovah, which came to Zephaniah, the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah.
- 2 By removing I will remove all things From the face of the land, saith Jehovah; I will remove man and beast;
- 3 And I will remove the bird of heaven, And the fishes of the sea: And stumblingblocks shall be to the ungodly! And I will cut off man From the face of the land, saith Jehovah: (190)
- 4 Yea, I will extend my hand upon Judah, And upon all the inhabitants of Je; And will cut off from this place the remnants of Baal, The name of *its* worshippers with the priests;
- 5 And those who worship, On *their* roofs, the host of heaven; And those who worship and swear by Jehovah, And swear by their own king;
- 6 And who turn back from following Jehovah, And who seek not Jehovah, And do not inquire of him.
- 7 Be silent at the presence of the Lord Jehovah! For nigh is the day of Jehovah; Yea, prepared hath Jehovah a sacrifice, He hath prepared his guests:
- 8 And it shall be in the day of Jehovah's sacrifice, That I will visit the princes and the king's sons, And all who wear foreign apparel;

- 9** And I will visit all those who dance on the threshold in that day,
Who fill the house of their masters By means of rapine and
fraud. (204)
- 10** And there shall be in that day, saith Jehovah, The voice of
crying from the fish-gate, and howling from the second *gate*,
And great breach from the hills. (212)
- 11** Howl ye, inhabitants of the lower part, For exterminated are the
people of traffic, Cut off are all loaded with money.
- 12** And it shall be in that day, That I will search Jerusalem with
candles, And visit the men, congealed on their lees, Who say in
their hearts, — “Good will not Jehovah do, Nor will he do evil:”
- 13** And their substance shall be a spoil, And their house a water;
And houses shall they build and not inhabit; And plant shall
they vineyards, And shall not drink the wine of them.
- 14** Nigh is the great day of Jehovah, Nigh and hastening quickly;
The voice of Jehovah’s day Will cry out bitterly, — then will he
be strong; (222)
- 15** A day of wrath *shall be* that day, A day of distress and of
affliction, A day of tumult and of desolation, A day of darkness
and of thick darkness, A day of clouds and of mist;
- 16** A day of trumpet and of shouting Over the fortified cities And
over the lofty citadels.
- 17** And I will straiten men, And they shall walk as the blind,
Because they have done wickedly against Jehovah; And poured
out shall be their blood as dust,
- 18** Even their silver and their gold shall not avail To deliver them, in
the day of Jehovah’s wrath; And by the fire of his indignation
shall their land be consumed; For a consummation, and a speedy
one, Will be made of all the inhabitants of the land.

CHAPTER 2.

- 1 Gather yourselves, gather, Ye nation, not worthy of being loved;
- 2 Before the decree brings forth, — (As chaff shall they pass away in a day) Before it comes upon you, The fury of Jehovah's anger, — Before it comes upon you, The day of the anger of Jehovah. (232)
- 3 Seek Jehovah all ye meek of the land, who his judgment have sought; Seek righteousness, seek humility, It may be that ye shall be concealed In the day of Jehovah's anger.
- 4 For Gaza, it shall be forsaken, And Ashkelon shall be a waste; Ashod shall they at mid-day drive out, And Ekron shall be rooted up.
- 5 Ho! the inhabitants of the line of the sea, The nation of the Cherethites! The word of Jehovah is against you; Canaan! the land of the Philistines! I will also exterminate thee, That there may be no inhabitant:
- 6 And the coast of the sea shall be a habitation For sheepcots of shepherds and folds for sheep; (242)
- 7 And that coast shall be For the residence of the house of Judah; Among them shall they feed; In the houses of Ashkelon Shall they in the evening lie down; For visit them shall Jehovah their God, and he will restore their captivity.
- 8 Heard have I the reproach of Moab, And the revilings of the children of Ammon; By which they have upbraided my people; And they have extended themselves over their border: (247)
- 9 Therefore *as* I live, Saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, — Surely Moab like Sodom shall be, And the children of Ammon like Gomorrah, A soil for the nettle and a mine for salt, And a waste for ever; The residue of my people shall plunder them, And the remnant of my nation shall possess them.
- 10 This shall be to them for their pride; Because they have reproached, And exulted over the people of Jehovah of hosts.

- 11** Terrible will Jehovah be to them; For he will consume all the gods of the earth, And worship him shall each from his place, All the islands of the nations. —
- 12** Ye also Ethiopians! — Slain by my sword shall they be.
- 13** And extend will he his hand to the north, And he will destroy Assyria, And set Nineveh a waste, A desolation like the desert:
- 14** And lie down within it shall flocks, All the beasts of the nations; Even the bittern and the owl Shall on its pillars pass the night; A voice shall sing in the window, In the door-way there shall be desolation, For he will make bare the cedar.
- 15** This is the exulting city! Which sat in confidence, Which said in her heart, — “I am, and there is besides me no other.” How is she become a waste, A resting-place for beasts! Every one who shall pass by Will hiss at her, he will shake his hand.

CHAPTER 3.

- 1** Wo to the polluted and the filthy — The city which is an oppressor! (261)
- 2** She has not attended to the voice, She has not received correction, In Jehovah has she not trusted, To her God she has not drawn nigh!
- 3** Her princes within her are roaring lions, Her judges, the wolves of the evening; They break not the bones in the morning!
- 4** Her Prophets are vain, men of deceits; (268) Her Priests have polluted what is holy, They have subverted the law. (269)
- 5** Jehovah is just in the midst of her, He will not do iniquity; Every morning his judgment He brings to light, — he fails not: Yet the unjust knoweth no shame.

- 6** I have cut off nations, Waste have become their citadels, I have destroyed their streets, So that no one passes through; Wasted have become their cities, That there is not a man, not an inhabitant: (275)
- 7** I said, “surely, thou wilt fear me, Thou wilt receive instruction;” Then cut off should not be her habitation, However I might have visited her: — (279) Truly! they have hastened, They have corrupted all their doings!
- 8** Therefore look for me, saith Jehovah, Till the day when I shall rise up for the prey; For my purpose is, To gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, That I may pour upon them my wrath, The whole fury of mine anger; For with the fire of my indignation Shall be devoured the whole earth. (281)
- 9** But I will then turn to the people a pure lip, That they may all call on the name of Jehovah, That they may serve him with one consent. (283)
- 10** Beyond the rivers of Ethiopia shall be my suppliants; The daughter of my dispersed shall bring mine offering.
- 11** In that day thou shalt not be ashamed On account of all thy doings, By which thou hast transgressed against me; For then will I remove from the midst of thee Those who rejoice in thy pride, And thou shalt not take pride any more In my holy mountain. (292)
- 12** And I will cause to remain in the midst of thee, A people afflicted and poor; And they shall trust in the name of Jehovah.
- 13** The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, And they shall not speak falsehood, And not found in their mouth Shall be a deceitful tongue; And they shall feed and lie down, And there shall be none to terrify *them*.
- 14** Exult thou daughter of Sion, Exult thou Israel; Rejoice, exult with thy whole heart, Thou daughter of je: (299)

- 15** Removed has Jehovah thy judgments, He has turned aside thine enemies; The King of Israel, Jehovah, is in the midst of thee, Thou shalt see evil no more.
- 16** In that day it shall be said to je, Fear not; Sion! relaxed let not thine hands be.
- 17** Jehovah thy God is in the midst of thee, He is strong, he will save; He will exult over thee with joy, He will rest in his love, (304) He will exult over thee with triumph.
- 18** The afflicted, at the appointed time, Will I gather, — who shall be of thee; Who sustained for her reproach. (308)
- 19** Behold, I will destroy all thine oppressors at that time, And I will save the halting, And restore the driven away, To make them a praise and a name In the land of their reproach.
- 20** At that time will I restore you, At that time will I gather you; For I will make you a name and a praise Among all the nations of the earth; When I shall restore your captivities, Before your eyes saith Jehovah.

END OF NEW TRANSLATION OF ZEPHANIAH.

FOOTNOTES

^{ft1} This clause stands connected with the preceding words; “the stumblingblocks” were the idols, and they were to be taken away “along with the wicked,” according to *Henderson*, and according to the version of *Symmachus*, *συν ἁσεβέσι*, though *Newcome*, with less accuracy, renders the words thus, —

And the stumblingblocks of the wicked.

The whole verse is poetical in its language; the collective singular, and not the plural, is used; and the first verb, [פָּקַד], in its most common meaning, is very expressive, and denotes the manner of the ruin that awaited the Jews. They were “gathered” and led into captivity. The two verses may be thus literally rendered, —

2. *Gatherings I will gather everything
From off the face of the land, saith Jehovah;*

3. *I will gather man and beast;
I will gather the bird of heaven and the fish of the sea,
And the stumblingblocks together with the wicked;
And I will cut them off, together with man,
From the face of the land, saith Jehovah. — Ed.*

^{ft2} The word is found in two other places, ^{<122305>}2 Kings 23:5, and ^{<281005>}Hosea 10:5. In the latter text the priests of the calf of Bethaven are thus called; in the former, they are said to be those who “burnt incense in the high places.” From this fact, *Parkhurst* concludes, that they were called *scorched*, as the word means, by their fumigating fires.

The “priests” mentioned here were the sacrifices, while the “Camerim” were the incense-burners. There were “altars” (not an altar) reared for Baal in the temple; one, as it seems, for sacrifices, and the other for incense. See ^{<122103>}2 Kings 21:3. In ^{<143404>}2 Chronicles 34:4, 5, the priests and sacrificers are alone mentioned; but in ^{<122305>}2 Kings 23:5, where the same things are recorded, the Camerim and incense are alone named. The Prophet in this passage mentions both.

Some, as *Cocceius* and *Henderson*, have been disposed to think that the unfaithful priests of the true God are here meant. But the other

view is more consistent with the whole passage. If we retain not the original word, we may thus render the line, —

The name of the incense-burners with the priests;

That is, those who burnt incense and those who offered sacrifices to Baal. — *Ed.*

^{ft3} It appears that this idol had two names, Moloc and Milcom, or Molcam. It is called Moloc, or Molec, in ^{<032005>}Leviticus 20:5, and in seven other places; but Milcom in ^{<111105>}1 Kings 11:5,33; ^{<122314>}2 Kings 23:14; as well as here, and also in ^{<244901>}Jeremiah 49:1,3, though improperly rendered in our version, “their king.” The Ammonites are the people spoken of.

The swearing is here differently expressed: it is *to* [(ל)] Jehovah; and by [(ב)] Milcam. To swear *to*, is to make a promise to another by an oath, or, in this instance, to swear allegiance to God: but to swear *by*, is to appeal to another as witness to an engagement. We have the two forms together in ^{<060919>}Joshua 9:19. The Jews made a solemn profession of obedience to God, and yet they acknowledged Melcam as God, by appealing to him as a witness to the truth. It is called the abomination of the Ammonites, ^{<111133>}1 Kings 11:33.

The image of this god, according to the Rabbins, was hollow, made of brass, and had seven compartments. In the first, they put flour — in the second, turtles — in the third, an ewe — in the fourth, a ram — in the fifth, a calf — in the sixth, an ox — and in the seventh, a child! All these were burnt together by heating the image in the inside! To drown the cries and noises that might be made, they used drums and other instruments. See [מלך] in *Parkhurst*. How cruel is superstition! and yet how wedded to it is man by nature! Though the Jews had knowledge of the religion of him who is the God of love and mercy; yet they preferred the religion of savages and barbarians. How strongly does this fact prove man’s natural antipathy to God! — *Ed.*

^{ft4} *Calvin* has omitted to notice the last words in the verse, “Nor enquire of him;” which *Henderson*, adopting a modern phraseology, has rendered, “nor apply to him.” The reading ought to be, as many MSS. have it, [דרשוהו]. The verb means to enquire of, to consult, and also to regard or to care for. They did not enquire of God as to his will, or they did not show any regard for him. See Genesis 25: 22; ^{<262001>}Ezekiel 20:1;

and also <051112> Deuteronomy 11:12; <180304> Job 3:4. To *seek* the Lord is to seek his favor and communion with him; to *enquire* of the Lord is to seek the knowledge of his will in any difficulty. — *Ed.*

^{ft5} The word is [חֵת], and is evidently an interjection enjoining silence, Hush! or, Silence!

*7. Silence at the presence of the Lord Jehovah!
For nigh is the day of Jehovah,
For prepared hath Jehovah a sacrifice,
Selected hath he his guests!*

The passage is remarkably forcible and striking. Jehovah was coming, and everything was prepared, and all were to be silent. And then follows what is no less striking and expressive, —

*8. And it shall be in the day of Jehovah's sacrifice,
That I will visit the princes and the king's sons,
And all who wear foreign apparel.
9. I will also visit, in that day,
Every one who leaps on the threshold,
Who fill the house of their master
By plunder and by fraud.*

There is in the last line a metonymy; the act is put for what was acquired by it: they filled the house of their master by spoils gained by plunder or violence, and by fraud or cheating. — *Ed.*

^{ft6} The first idea of the verb [קָדַשׁ], is evidently to set apart, to separate either men or things for a certain purpose. For this meaning *Parkhurst* refers to <032024> Leviticus 20:24, compared with version 26, and to <051902> Deuteronomy 19:2,7, compared with <062007> Joshua 20:7. This idea seems the most suitable here, “I have set apart (or selected) my guests.” *Newcome* renders it “appointed,” and *Henderson*, “consecrated,” as *Calvin* does. “Segregavit — set apart,” is the version of *Drusius*, and *Junius* has “preparavit — prepared.” When the verb is followed by “war,” it is rendered “prepare” in our version. See <240604> Jeremiah 6:4; <290309> Joel 3:9; <330305> Micah 3:5. The explanation given by *Theodosius* is ἀφορίσει — he separated or selected. — *Ed.*

^{ft7} This was a prophecy: though the king Josiah had no children at this time, yet he had some afterwards; and they proved themselves deserving of the judgment here announced, and it was inflicted on them.

Henderson's objection, that as Josiah had then no children, the prophecy could not apply to them personally, seems wholly inadmissible: it was a *prophecy*. — *Ed.*

^{ft8} Or, literally, “the garment of a foreigner or stranger,” [נִכְרִי]. The singular is used poetically for the plural, instead of “the garments of foreigners.” — *Ed.*

^{ft9} *Marckius*, following the *Septuagint*, and some of the fathers, *Cyril*, *Theodoret*, *Jerome*, etc., think that the thoughtless intruders into the temple are here meant, and such as brought there as sacrifices and gifts the fruits of plunder and fraud. But the passage cannot possibly bear this meaning according to the Hebrew text: nor is such a meaning consistent with the context. The view given here is that of *Kimki*, *Drusius*, *Newcome*, and *Henderson*. — *Ed.*

^{ft10} *Junius*, *Piscator*, *Newcome*, and *Henderson* think that it means the second city, a part of Jerusalem, being so called, as they supposed, in ^{<161109>} *Nehemiah* 11:9: where our version is considered to be wrong, and the clause ought to be, “and Judah, the son of Jeruiah, was over the second city” — [משנה על-העיר]. So it is deemed improperly rendered “college” in ^{<122214>} *2 Kings* 22:14 and ^{<143422>} *2 Chronicles* 34:22; where it ought to be “in the second city.” But the passage in *Nehemiah* is not decisive on the subject; and our version is countenanced by the former part of the verse, where “Joel” is said to be the “overseer,” and “Judah” is mentioned as being next to him, the second in office: and it is so rendered in the *Septuagint*. As to the other text, the word is by itself as here. What *Calvin*, after *Cyril* and *Theodoret*, suggests, is the most probable solution.

The word rendered by *Calvin* “contritio — breach,” and by *Henderson*, “destruction,” is [שָׁבַר]. As “crying” and “howling” are said to proceed from the other parts, so something similar must have proceeded from “the hills.” The word means breaking, and it is often applied to the heart — “a broken heart,” ^{<193418>} *Psalms* 34:18; 51:19, etc. It seems to mean here the breaking out into weeping and wailing. The parallelism of the verse would thus be complete —

*And there shall be in that day, saith Jehovah,
The voice of crying from the fish-gate,
And howling from the second gate,
And great wailing from the hills.*

Wailing is the breaking out of anguish and pangs. The word is used in ^{<262106>}Ezekiel 21:6, for acute pain in the loins, and may be considered as used here metonymically. — *Ed.*

^{ft11} This original meaning of the word is much more probable than what lexicographers generally give. The braying or pounding is evidently derived from the noun, and the noun from the form of the mortar. Most agree that the word here means the *lower* part of the city — the hollow, from the circumstance of being surrounded by hills. The “hills” were those on which a part of the city was built, such as Zion, Moriah and Ophal. — *Ed.*

^{ft12} This opinion has been entertained, because the Jews are so called in ^{<281208>}Hosea 12:8. That the word means a trader or merchant is evident from ^{<184106>}Job 41:6, (in the Hebrew Bibles, 40:30;) ^{<232308>}Isaiah 23:8; ^{<261704>}Ezekiel 17:4. In the last passage it is rendered “traffic” in our version; and it may be so rendered here — “all the people of traffic,” or of trade. The version of *Newcome* is, “all the trafficking people.” The verse may be thus literally rendered, —

*Howl ye, the inhabitants of the lower part,
For reduced to silence have been all the people of trade,
Cut off have been all the laden with silver.*

They are called to howl, as though their calamity had already taken place, a mode of speaking often used by the Prophets. That the event was future is clear from the context, especially from the next verse. “Reduced to silence” — [נִדְמָה], is literally the meaning, not “destroyed;” and appropriate is the term, as people of trade create much bustle and noise. “The laden with silver,” may be rendered, as *Newcome* does, “the bearers of silver:” and silver is here for money. — *Ed.*

^{ft13} There is a similar meaning in ^{<244811>}Jeremiah 48:11; but the verb is different, [שָׁקַט], which means to be still, to rest, to settle, while the verb here is [קָפַא], which signifies to be condensed, or to be congealed, ^{<021508>}Exodus 15:8. But as things congealed become fixed, the verb seems to have the meaning of fixedness here; as wines on the lees, to which allusion is made, do not become congealed, the comparison seems to be, that as wine kept still on the lees increases in strength and flavor so the Jews, settling on their dregs — their sins — became strengthened and confirmed in their wickedness and atheistic notions.

But *Newcome* and *Henderson* take another view of the metaphor, and consider that “the thoughtless tranquillity of the rich is compared to the fixed unbroken surface of fermented liquors.” Our version favors the former idea, as the verb is rendered “settled.” — *Ed.*

^{ft14} The Rabbinical punctuation has destroyed the simplicity of this passage by connecting “bitter” with the latter clause. *Jerome*, *Pagninus*, *Newcome*, as well as the *Septuagint*, connect it with the former clause. The literal rendering of the two lines is as follows —

***The voice of the day of Jehovah shall be grievous;
Roar out there (or then) shall the brave.***

“The voice of the day,” etc., means the voice uttered on that day, as *Drusius* explains it. [מר] is no doubt “bitter;” but it is often applied in scripture to express what is grievous, afflictive, or sorrowful. If we render [שם], “there,” it refers to Jerusalem, verse 12; but it is sometimes used as an adverb of time, “then,” see ^{<191405>} Psalm 14:5; ^{<160315>} Nehemiah 3:15. “The meaning is,” says *Drusius*, “that the voice of that day, which they who excel in strength of mind and body shall utter, shall be bitter.” The whole verse is remarkably concise and emphatical, —

***14. Nigh is the great day of Jehovah,
Nigh and hastening quickly:
The voice of the day of Jehovah shall be grievous;
Roar out then shall the brave.***

Then the following verse is not to begin, as in our version, which as been followed by *Newcome* and *Henderson*, “That day is a day of wrath,” but thus —

A day of wrath shall be that day.

This is the order of the original, and as there is no verb, it must be supplied and regulated as to its tense by the context. — *Ed.*

^{ft15} The original words are similar in sound and meaning; the first, [צרה], comes from a verb which means to inclose, to confine, to straiten, and it may be rendered, narrowness, confinement, straitness, distress. The other, [מצוקה], is oppression, as the verb means to press down, to press close.

^{ft16} Waste or confusion is, [משואה שֶׁאֵה], derived from the same root, may be rendered desolation. The two next words, “darkness” and “thick darkness,” occur in ^{<290202>} Joel 2:2. In the same passage we have also “the day of cloudiness and of entire darkness,” literally, bare or naked darkness; for the word is, [ערפל], derived, as I conceive, from [ער], bare, and [אפל], thick darkness. There is a gradation in the words used in each line; the second word is stronger than the first. — *Ed.*

^{ft17} Rather “acclamation,” the triumphant voice of conquerors. As an attempt to preserve the distinctive character of each word in this singular passage, I offer the following version —

*15. A day of extreme wrath shall be that day,
A day of distress and oppression,
A day of waste and of desolation,
A day of darkness and of thick darkness,
A day of cloudiness and of entire darkness;*

*16. A day of the trumpet and of acclamation
Over the cities that are inclosed,
And over the towers which are lofty.*

The word [עברה], “extreme wrath,” means such wrath as passes over all bounds — overflowing wrath. We are obliged to use the word darkness three times for lack of suitable terms. The first is the common darkness of the night, the second is a grosser darkness, and the third is complete darkness. The words “gloominess” and “obscurity,” used by *Newcome* and *Henderson*, are not sufficiently strong, and convey not the meaning. — *Ed.*

^{ft18} The Hebrew words are literally,

For against Jehovah have they sinned. — Ed.

^{ft19} “Copiously and in contempt,” says *Marckius*; “as a thing of no value,” says *Grotius*; “as worthless as dust,” says *Drusius*. The comparison is evidently intended to show that their blood, or their life, would be treated with contempt, and no more regarded than dust. — *Ed.*

^{ft20} The word is [לחם], usually rendered food; here it means what is fed, the carcass, the body. It is rendered “flesh” by the Septuagint. — *Ed.*

CHAPTER 2

^{ft21} Quickness rather than terror is what is evidently meant. See version 14. Most agree in this respect. *Newcome* renders it “speedy,” and *Henderson* “sudden.” The word “riddance,” for [כלה], in our version, is improper. It is rendered “full end” by *Newcome*, and “consummation” by *Henderson*, and “συντέλειαν — end” by the Septuagint. The particle [ἅ] does not mean “altogether,” as rendered by *Henderson*, but it is an asseveration — surely, indeed, certainly, doubtless. The [ἅ] before “inhabitants” has evidently here the meaning of κατὰ, with regard to. It is rendered ἐπὶ, upon, in the Septuagint, and “with” by *Marckius* and *Newcome*. The whole verse is as follows, —

*18. Neither their silver nor their gold
Shall be able to deliver them
In the day of the extreme-wrath of Jehovah;
By the fire of his jealousy
Shall be consumed the whole land;
For an end, doubtless sudden, will he make,
As to all the inhabitants of the land.*

^{Ft22} The verb, found only in five other places — ^{<020507>}Exodus 5:7,12; ^{<041532>}Numbers 15:32,33; and ^{<111710>}1 Kings 17:10,12, means to collect, to gather, and not “to search,” as said by *Kimchi*, and adopted by *Marckius*; nor “to bind,” as rendered by *Henderson*. The import of the passage is considered by all to be an invitation to repentance, though the words are differently rendered. It is difficult to see the meaning when it is said — “Gather yourselves, yea, gather,” etc, except such an assembly is meant as is recommended by ^{<290114>}Joel 1:14; the kind of gathering being well understood, it is not mentioned. “Gather yourselves,” that is, to offer prayers, says *Grotius*. “Be ye assembled — συνάχθητε,” is the rendering of the Septuagint. — *Ed.*

^{Ft23} [כס] is found as a verb in four other places, ^{<013130>}Genesis 31:30; ^{<181415>}Job 14:15; ^{<191712>}Psalms 17:12; and ^{<198403>}Psalms 84:3. It means to be or to grow pale, either through love, as in Genesis and Job, or through hunger, as in the first Psalm referred to, or through longing for God’s house, as in the last, or through shame, as some — such as *Grotius*, *Dathius*, and *Gesenius*, suppose to be the case here; and they

therefore give this rendering — “O nation without shame;” or, “not ashamed.” This idea is favored by the Septuagint — “unteachable — *ἀπαίδευτον*.” In no instance is it found in a passive sense as to the feeling through which the paleness is occasioned, and therefore “worthy of love,” or “desired,” cannot be its proper rendering. *Buxtorf* give its meaning in Niphal — “desiderio affici — to be touched with or to feel a desire.” Hence the person spoken of is the subject, not the object, of the desire. According, then, to the use of the verb, the rendering here is to be — “Ye nation that feels no desire,” that is, for God and his law, or, “that feels no shame,” that is, for its sins. The paraphrase of the *Targum* is — “not willing to be converted to the law,” which corresponds with the idea which has been stated.

Marckius considers that the nation is here described as having “no desire,” that is for that which was good, and that its torpidity and indifference as to religion is what is set forth. And such is the view of *Cocceius*; it had no thirst for righteousness, no desire for the kingdom of God — the mark of an unregenerated mind. — *Ed.*

^{Ft24} It is difficult to make the words bear this sense. Hardly a sentence has been more variously rendered. The most satisfactory solution perhaps is to regard it parenthetical, and to consider “the day” as that allowed for repentance: it was to pass away quickly, like the chaff carried away by the wind —

As the chaff passing away will be the day:

Both *Marckius* and *Henderson* regard this as the meaning. Then the whole verse might be thus translated —

2. *Before the bringing forth of the decree,*
(As the chaff passing away will be the day,)
Before it shall come upon you,
The burning of Jehovah’s anger;
Before it shall come upon you,
The day of the anger of Jehovah.

Literally it is, “Before it shall not come,” etc., or, “During the time when it shall not come,” etc. [בְּטֵרָם] may be rendered “while;” then the version would be —

While it shall not come upon you,
The burning of Jehovah’s anger;
While it shall not come upon you,
The day of the anger of Jehovah.

There are several MSS. which omit the two first lines; but evidently without reason. They are retained in the Septuagint.

Possibly the second line may refer to the speedy execution of “the decree,” that its day would pass quickly. Its birth, or its bringing forth was its commencement; and the second line may express its speedy execution: it would be carried into effect with the quickness by which the chaff is carried away by the wind —

As the chaff passing away will be its day.

The word [עבר] is, in either case, a participle, and the auxiliary verb is understood, as often is the case in Hebrew, and must partake of the tense of the context. — *Ed.*

^{Ft25} *Newcome* renders the adjective “lowly,” and the noun “lowliness;” but *Marckius* and *Henderson* render the first “humble,” as the Septuagint do — ταπεινοί, and the second “humility.” They were those who had been made humble by affliction. The design of affliction is to make us humble, submissive to God’s will; and this is the effect of sanctified affliction. It is somewhat singular that the verb means to afflict and to be humble, as though affliction were needful to render us humble. The word [ענות], occurs in ^{<102236>} 2 Samuel 22:36, and ^{<191835>} Psalm 18:35, and is rendered “gentleness” in our common version, but more correctly in our Prayer-book version “loving correction.” Perhaps the best rendering would be “humbling affliction;” and the idea of humbling affliction making great is very striking. The word used by the Septuagint is παιδεία — discipline; and the Vulgate is the same. — *Ed.*

^{Ft26} The idea is not “protected,” as given by *Newcome*, but “secreted” or concealed as in a hiding-place. “Hid” is the version of *Henderson*, and also of *Marckius*. — *Ed.*

^{Ft27} This verse, literally rendered, retains more of its poetic character, —
4. *For Gaza, forsaken shall she be,
And Ashkelon shall be a desolation;
Ashdod, at mid-day shall they drive it out,
And Ekron shall be rooted up.*

In the first and the last line there is a correspondence in the sound of the words.

The following presents another instance of the nominative case absolute, —

5. *Woe to the dwellers of the line of the sea,
The nation of the Kerethites!
The word of Jehovah is against you:
Canaan, the land of the Philistines,
I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant.*

The *line* of the sea, meaning the coast along the shore, is so called, says *Henderson*, “from the custom of using a cord or line in measuring off or dividing a territory.”

Some derive “Kerethites” from [כרת], to cut off, to destroy; and so they were cutters off or destroyers. They were celebrated men of war in the time of David, ^{<100818>} 2 Samuel 8:18. “Philistines” mean emigrants, says *Henderson*; the word being derived from a verb, which signifies, in the Ethiopic language, to rove, to migrate. — *Ed.*

^{Ft28} The words, [נוֹת כֶּרֶת רְעִים], are rendered by *Calvin*, “habita-cul-um caul-is pas-tor-um — an habitation (or a dwelling) for the shee-pcots of shep-herds.” The *Targum* takes the two first words in the singular number; the second is evidently so, and the first may be so also: and [כרת] certainly does not mean shee-pcots, but dig-ging, from [כרה], to dig. The reference is either to the pits dug for watering the flock, as *Piscator* thinks, or to the subterranean huts, or caves, dug for the purpose of shelter, as *Drusius* and *Bochart* suppose. *Junius* and *Tremelius* render the words, “shee-pcots, the delvings of shep-herds;” and *Drusius*, “dwellings of the dig-ging out of shep-herds,” i.e., dwellings dug out by shep-herds. The most literal and the easiest construction is, “dwellings, the dig-ging of shep-herds.” Then the verse might be thus rendered, —

*And the line of the sea shall be dwellings,
Dug out by shepherds, and folds for sheep.*

Parkhurst quotes *Harmer*, who says, “the Eastern shepherds make use of *caves* very frequently, sleeping in them and driving their flocks into them at night..The mountains bordering on the *Syrian* coast are remarkable for the number of caves, and are found particularly in the neighborhood of *Ashkelon*.” How fully then was this prophecy fulfilled. — *Ed.*

Ft29 That is, the reproach cast by Moab, and the revilings uttered by Ammon. — *Ed.*

Ft30 There is a difference as to the meaning of the last line. *Newcome* adopts our common version, —

And magnified themselves against their border

Henderson's rendering is essentially the same —

And carried themselves haughtily against their border.

The verb [נָדַל] is transitive and intransitive in Kal — to make great and to be great; it seems to partake of a similar character in Hiphil, as it is found here, to magnify, and to grow great or proud, and hence to exult or to triumph; and when followed by [עַל], as here, to exult over a person or a country, — see ^{<181905>} Job 19:5; ^{<193526>} Psalm 35:26; 38:17; ^{<263513>} Ezekiel 35:13. In these verses “to exult over” would be the best rendering; as also in 10th verse of this chapter. The idea of enlarging or extending over, as adopted by *Jerome* and *Dathius*, as well as by *Calvin*, is not countenanced by any other passage. The best rendering here is —

And exulted over their border.

This line corresponds with the revilings of Ammon, as the preceding does with the reproach of Moab. That it was the triumphant and exulting language of Ammon is evident, because it was what was *heard* — “I have heard,” etc. The particle [אֲשֶׁר], rendered here “quibus — by which,” and “wherewith” by *Newcome*, is rendered “who” by *Marckius* and *Henderson* — “who have reproached on my people;” and this is the most natural construction. Some have rendered it “because.” — *Ed.*

Ft31 This clause is rendered differently by some. The word [מִמְשַׁק] occurs only here. It is rendered by the *Targum* by a word which means a “deserted place,” and so *Newcome* renders it, “A deserted place for the thorn:” so also do *Drusius*, *Grotius*, *Piscator*, and *Marckius*. The Septuagint have mistaken the word for “Damascus,” and give a version of the whole clause wholly foreign to the context. *Henderson* thinks that the word has the same meaning with [מִשַּׁד], to draw out, to extend, and gives this version, “A region of overrunning brambles.” This is far-fetched. The word, [חֲרוּל], rendered “nettle” by *Calvin*,

Grotius, and others, cannot be so taken, according to *Drusius* and *Bochart*, for in ^{<183007>} Job 30:7, men are said to gather under it. It is found besides only in ^{<202431>} Proverbs 24:31. It may be rendered either a thorn or a bramble. The other part of the sentence is literally “a digging place for salt.”

Moab was to be like Sodom, and Ammon like Gomorrhah, not as to the *manner* of their ruin, but as to the *extent* of it. It was to be an *entire* overthrow. Their habitation was not to become a pool of water like Sodom and Gomorrhah, but a place where the bramble was to grow, and salt might be dug. And it was to be “a desolation,” [עד-עולם], “for ages;” for the word means an indefinite time. So *Drusius* regards it here as meaning a long time. But some consider the “desolation,” as having reference to the people and not to the place. If so, the rendering were wholly obliterated. Moab and Ammon, as a separate people, are altogether extinct. The whole verse is as follows —

*9. Therefore, as I live,
Saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel,
Surely Moab like Sodom shall be,
And the children of Ammon like Gomorrhah,
The desert of the thorn and the excavation of salt,
Yea, a desolation for ages;
The remnant of my people shall plunder them,
And the residue of my nation shall possess them.*

The two last lines refer to the children of Ammon, as the two preceding especially to Moab. The country of Moab was on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, and that of Ammon was north-east, of Moab. Both were subdued and led captive by Nebuchadnezzar about four or six years after the captivity of Judah. They were afterwards partially restored, especially the children of Ammon, as Tobiah was their chief in the time of Nehemiah. ^{<160403>} Nehemiah 4:3. They were “plundered,” as recorded in 1 Maccabees 5:35,51, by Judas Maccabeus. Of Moab we read nothing at that time: but it appears, that for ages it has been desolate. “Not one,” says *Burckhart*, the traveler, “of the ancient cities of Moab exists as tenanted by man,” and he speaks of “their entire desolation.” Another modern traveler, *Seetzen*, a Russian, speaking of Ammon, says, “All this country, formerly so populous, is now changed into a vast desert.” — *Ed.*

Ft32 The word, [נורא], is rendered “to be feared,” by *Cocceius* and *Henderson*, and [עליהם], “above them,” that is, “the gods of the earth,” mentioned in the next line; it being considered an instance of a pronoun preceding its noun. But this is forced; and it is not necessary. Moab and Ammon are evidently referred to; and what is said is, that God would be terrible to them, as well as to others, for he would famish or destroy all the gods of the earth. And then in the next verse he mentions other nations. Some extend what is here said to gospel-times; but there seems no reason for this, inasmuch as God’s judgment is the subject of the Prophet. — *Ed.*

Ft33 Literally —

*And bow down to him, every one from his place,
Shall all the islands of the nations.*

Ft34 By the earth the Jews understood the great continent of all Asia and Africa, to which they had access by land; and by the isles of the sea they understood the places to which they sailed by sea, particularly all Europe. Sir I. Newton on Daniel, p. 276.” — *Newcome*.

Ft35 *Newcome* cuts the knot, here by an emendation, by [אתם], ye, for [המה], they; and *Houbigant*, by [תהיו], ye shall be, — “the wounded of my sword shall ye be.” This is according to the Septuagint; but the former is more in accordance with the Hebrew idiom; for the pronoun is often used without the auxiliary verb. Some take [המה] as *ipsi* in Latin, connected with *vos*, ye yourselves. Then the rendering would be —

*Also ye Cushites,
The slain of my sword shall ye yourselves be.*

But what *Calvin* says is not uncommon in the Prophet, the abrupt change of persons. — *Ed.*

Ft36 It is literally, “every wild beast of the nation,” — [נו], — “of the land,” in the Septuagint. What is meant is, every wild beast that belonged to that country. — *Ed.*

Ft37 Both *Newcome* and *Henderson* render the two words, “the pelican and the porcupine.” The former says that [קאת], “pelican,” comes from [קאה], to vomit, because it casts up fish or water from its membranaceous bag; and [קפר], “porcupine,” according to *Bochart*, isf

rom the verb, which means to cut off as by a bite, or rather, he says, from its Syriac meaning, to dread, for it is a solitary animal. See *Newcome*. But *Parkhurst* contends that it is the hedge-hog, and both the Septuagint and Vulgate render it so.

What *Calvin* translates “in postibus ejus,” [בכפתויה], is rendered by *Newcome*, “in the carved lintels thereof,” by *Henderson*, “in her capitals,” and by *Parkhurst*, “in her door-porches,” i.e. when thrown down. — *Ed.*

CHAPTER 3

^{ft38} The first word, [מורה], is rendered “rebellions” by *Newcome* and *Henderson*. The *Vulgate* is nearly the same, “provocatrix — provoking.” The verb is [מרא], once in *Hiphil* in ^{<183908>} Job 39:8; and to take it to be the same with [מרה], to rebel, is gratuitous. The context in Job shows its idea to be that of raising up or swelling; and *Parkhurst* very properly renders the participle here, swelling, arrogant, insolent; and this notion entirely corresponds with the character given of the city in the next verse; being arrogant, it did “not hear the voice” of God. The verse may be rendered thus —

*Woe to the arrogant and polluted,
The city, which is an oppressor!*

Then follows a specification as to her conduct, —

*She has not hearkened to the voice,
She has not received instruction;
In Jehovah has she not trusted,
To her God has she not drawn nigh.*

To “obey the voice,” as given in our version and by *Newcome*, is not quite correct; she was too arrogant even to hear or attend to the voice. “Correction,” as in our version, and by *Calvin*, is rendered “instruction” by *Newcome* and *Henderson*; for [מוסר] has often this meaning. The *Septuagint* have $\pi\alpha\delta\alpha\iota\upsilon\alpha\nu$ — discipline. But the same phrase occurs in verse 7, where the word necessarily means instruction, by way of warning, communicated by the example of others. — *Ed.*

Ft39 This is the explanation of *Grotius*, *Mede*, and *Henderson*. The latter's version is — "They gnaw no bones in the morning;" *i.e.*, all is devoured in the night. *Newcome*, adopting the conjecture of *Houbigant*, supposes the true reading to be [אֲנִשִׁ], and gives this rendering — "They wait not until the morning," which seems to have no meaning in this connection. What *Cocceius* proposes is more probable — "Who have not gnawed in the morning;" and on this account they were exceedingly voracious in the evening. But the idea of our common version is very appropriate; it implies that they were like wild beasts prowling all night, and carrying as it were their prey to their dens, that they might devour it there in the morning. This is the view taken by *Henry*. "They devour the flesh," says *Adam Clarke*, "in the night, and gnaw the bones, and extract the marrow afterwards." — *Ed.*

Ft40 Her prophets are light, *they are* treacherous men. — *Newcome*.

Her prophets are vainglorious, hypocritical men. — *Henderson*.

The word rendered "light," as a river, and not "unstable," as in our version. It is applied as a participle in <070904> Judges 9:4, to designate persons overflowing in wickedness, dissolute, licentious, dissipated; and as a noun in <242332> Jeremiah 23:32, to set forth the licentious conduct of the false prophets, who like the priests under the Papacy, were given to lasciviousness, and "committed adultery with their neighbors' wives," <242923> Jeremiah 29:23. See also <242314> Jeremiah 23:14. As *Zephaniah* was cotemporary with *Jeremiah*, his description of the Prophets is thus seen to be the same, "Her Prophets are licentious," or lascivious.

Men of dissimulations or deceits, [אֲנִשִׁ בַּגְּדוּת], signify, that under the pretense of telling the truth, they delivered what was false; or in the words of *Jeremiah*, they "caused the people to err by their lies," while they pretended to deliver true messages from God: so that <242332> Jeremiah 23:32, contains an explanation of this clause.

"Deceiving men" would perhaps be the best rendering. Though they were licentious, yet they deceived men, and made them to believe that they were true Prophets. They were impostors, and notwithstanding their immortal character, they persuaded deluded men that they were true and faithful. — *Ed.*

ft41 The word, [קדש], as *Calvin* intimates, does not specifically mean the sanctuary, but holiness, or, as *Henderson* renders it, “what is sacred,” or holy. Both our version and *Newcome* improperly render it “the sanctuary.” The explanation of what is meant may be found in <261226> Ezekiel 12:26. The word for sanctuary is [מקדש]. See <262338> Ezekiel 23:38,39.

The words, [חמסו תורה], have been taken to mean, — either, “They violated the law,” as the words are rendered in <261226> Ezekiel 12:26, that is, transgressed it by acting contrary to it; or, “They perverted the law,” forcing it, as it were, out of its plain meaning by subtle glosses. The *Septuagint* render the verb ηθετησαν — set aside or abolished, in Ezekiel, and here ἁσεβουσιν — act impiously. “Trangressed,” says *Grotius*; “Do violecne to,” say *Piscator* and *Drusius*, that is, by wresting its words. It occurs much oftener as a noun than as a verb, and it commonly means a wrong or injustice done in an outrageous and violent manner. According to this general idea, we may render the phrase here, “they have outraged the law,” either by their conduct, or by their comments. It was in either case a wrong done to the law, that was enormous, passing all reason and decency. So that to transgress or to violate, or to do violence to, or to pervert the law, does not convey the full meaning. — *Ed.*

Ft42 The verbs here are in the future tense, but evidently express, as *Calvin* observes, a continued act. The same is exactly the case in *Welsh*; the verbs are in the future tense, but are understood as expressing a present act or a continued act, or what is continually or habitually done. In English the present must be adopted —

The righteous Jehovah is in the midst of her,

He doeth no injustice:

Every morning his judgment

He bringeth to light — it fails not;

Yet the unjust knoweth no shame.

“Injustice” in the second, and “unjust” in the fifth line, come from the same root. “Judgment” here is what God judges and determines to be right and just; and it is set forth here as the sun rising every day from morning to morning, and as never failing to appear. — *Ed.*

Ft43 This verse, literally rendered, is as follows, —

*I have cut off nations;
Desolate are become their towers;
I have made solitary their streets, without a passenger;
Deserted are become their cities,
Without a man, without an inhabitant.*

It is not the *destruction*. The nations being cut off, then the towers became desolate, the streets empty, and the cities forsaken. The last line but one is literally — “Hunted have been their cities,” so that no man was left behind. — *Ed.*

^{Ft44} The last clause has been variously rendered. There is no assistance from the Septuagint, as the whole text is very different. *Marckius*, after *Drusius*, connects it, not with the preceding, but with the following line, in this sense, that how much soever God had punished the city, yet its inhabitants were the more best to corrupt their ways. But the words can hardly admit of this meaning. *Henderson* supposes [כ] to be understood before [כל], and gives this rendering of the two lines —

*That her habitation might not be cut off,
According to all that I had appointed concerning her.*

Newcome differs as to the last line —

After all the punishment with which I had visited her.

None of these are satisfactory. *Grotius*, taking the sense of the *Targum*, means to have given the best meaning. He says that [פקד], followed by [על], means sometimes to appoint or constitute, and refers to ^{<143623>} 2 Chronicles 36:23, “All the *good* which I have appointed to her,” or promised; but he unnecessarily supposes “shall come” to be understood; for the word, “all which,” may be considered to be in apposition with “habitation.” I give the following version of this whole verse —

*I said, “Surely thou wilt fear me,
Thou wilt receive instruction;”
Then cut off should not be her habitation —
All that I have committed to her:
Yet they rose up early, they corrupted all their doings.*

To rise up early is a Hebrew phrase, which means a resolved and diligent attention to a thing. The import of the line is, that they with full-bent purpose and activity corrupted all their doings. — *Ed.*

Fi45 This verse is considered by *Newcome* and *Henderson* to be addressed to the godly, to encourage them at the approaching calamities, while *Piscator*, *Grotius*, *Marckius*, and *Dathius*, agree with *Calvin* that it is an awful warning to the wicked Jews, spoken of in the preceding verse. Differing somewhat from *Calvin*, they regard the “nations” and “kingdoms” to be the Babylonians, who were composed of various nations and kingdoms, and “upon them” to be the Jews, and “the whole land” to be that of Judea. This view, no doubt, is the most consistent with the context. The objection made by *Henderson*, that the words *expect*, or *wait for me*, are ever used in a good sense, seems to have no force, for these words by themselves can mean neither what is good nor what is bad, the whole depends on the context. The verb [חכה] simply means to tarry, to wait — *μενειν*. The word “therefore” seems to connect this with the preceding verse, and there is nothing in the foregoing part of the chapter that alludes to the godly. Besides, the words which follow “wait for me” explain them, as will be seen by the following literal rendering of the whole verse —

8. *Therefore wait for me, saith Jehovah,
For the day of my rising to the prey!
For my purpose is to gather nations,
To assemble kingdoms,
In order to pour on them my indignation,
All the heat of my anger;
For by the fire of my jealousy
Shall be consumed the whole land.*

The “fire of God’s jealousy” sufficiently proves that what is meant is the land of Judea. (See chapter 1:18.) — *Ed.*

Fi46 [כִּי אַחֲרָיִךְ], “For then,” *Henderson*; “Surely then,” *Newcome*; “Postea vero — but afterwards,” *Dathius* and *Grotius*. And *Newcome* says, that [אַחֲרָיִךְ] is used here largely, for “afterwards.” It refers to the time after the execution of the judgments previously mentioned.

“The pure lip” is evidently not the language which God would adopt in addressing the nations, but the language they would adopt in addressing him. What is meant is a pure heart; what gives utterance to the heart is mentioned for the heart itself; as the “shoulder” is afterwards used for the service that is rendered to God.

The verb [הָפַךְ], to turn, means to change the form, condition, or course of a thing, conveying perhaps here the idea, that the pure lip is substituted for that which is impure: “I will give them as a change, instead of what they have, a pure lip.” Μεταστρεψω — “I will change,” Sept. and Sym.; στρεψω — “I will turn,” Aq. and Theod. It is rendered “reddam” and “restituam” by *Drusius* and *Grotius*.

Newcome, following the conjecture of *Houbigant*, reads [אֶשְׂפַךְ], “I will pour out,” contrary to all the ancient versions, and without the countenance of a single MS.

Though the word, [עַמִּים], peoples, most frequently means the nations, yet there are instances in which it means the people of Israel, inasmuch as they were composed of various tribes. See ^{<112228>} 1 Kings 22:28; ^{<290206>} Joel 2:6. And if we render the verb, “restore,” with *Drusius* and *Grotius*, then we must adopt this meaning. Eleven MSS. have “and,” [וְ], before the verb to “serve:” and as there is no preposition before “shoulder,” we may render the verse —

*But I will then restore to the people a pure lip,
That they may, all of them, call on the name of Jehovah, —
And one shoulder, that they may serve him. — Ed.*

^{Ft47} The expression “with one shoulder” is rendered by the Septuagint, “under one yoke” — ὑπὸ ζυγὸν ἓνα. The idea is that of oxen drawing together. To serve God under one yoke, is to do the same service unitedly. “A metaphor,” says *Newcome*, “from the joint efforts of yoked beasts.” — *Ed.*

^{Ft48} It is more consonant with the style of the Prophets to render the clauses apart, as *Calvin* does, than as it is done in our version, and by *Newcome* and *Henderson*. The auxiliary verb, as is often the case, is to be understood in the first clause, —

*From beyond the rivers of Cush shall be my suppliants;
The daughter of my dispersed shall bring my offering.*

^{Ft49} This may be rendered, “Those who exult in thy exaltation:” the Targum has it, “in thy glory.” This “glory” or “exaltation,” as explained in the next verse, was Mount Sion. There was a preeminence, but it was made an object of unholy boasting. The paraphrase of *Henderson*, “thy proud exulters,” completely leaves out the character of their exultation. The whole verse may be thus rendered, —

*In that day thou shalt not be ashamed of thy doings,
By which thou hast transgressed against me;
For then will I remove from the midst of thee
Those who exult in thy exaltation;
And thou shalt no more be elevated
On account of the mount of my holiness.*

The word [גאֹלָה] means exaltation or glory in a good as well as in a bad sense. See <199301> Psalm 93:1; <231205> Isaiah 12:5. What they exulted in was in itself good, but they exulted only in an outward privilege, without connecting it with God, as many have done in all ages. This is the essence of Pharisaism. *Vatables* and *Drusius* regard the word as having this sense here. — *Ed.*

Ft50 The first word, [עֲבִי], means one made humble by distress or affliction, the humbled, rather than the humble. The second word, [דָּל], is one exhausted, or reduced in number, or reduced to poverty. *Newcome* renders it “lowly,” but improperly. *Jerome* has “pauperem et egenum — poor and needy;” the Septuagint, “πραῦν καὶ ταπεινόν — meek and humble;” *Marckius*, “afflictum et attenuatum — afflicted and diminished.” Perhaps the best rendering would be, “a people humbled and reduced.” The idea of being “afflicted” or distressed, is excluded by what is expressed at the end of the next verse, and also that of being “poor” in a worldly respect. The reference seems to be to a humbled state of mind, occasioned by calamities, and to a reduced number — a remnant.

“I will leave” for [השאַרְתִּי], as in our version, is not its full meaning. It means to reserve as a remnant. “I will cause to remain,” or, “I will reserve,” would be the proper rendering. — *Ed.*

Ft51 To give the words their specific meaning, they may be thus rendered,

*Cry aloud thou daughter of Zion,
Shout ye Israel;
Rejoice and exult with all thine heart,
Thou daughter of Jerusalem.*

The first two lines encourage the fullest expression of feelings, loud crying, and shouting like a trumpet; and then is set forth the character of these feelings; they were to be those of job and exultation. Our version, *Newcome* and *Henderson*, render the second line correctly, but

not the first; and “Be glad and rejoice” are too feeble to express what the third line contains: for the exhortation is to “rejoice” and to “exult.” It was to be the loud cry of joy, and the shouting of exultation or triumph. — *Ed.*

ft52 Turned aside hath Jehovah thy judgments. — *Ed.*

ft53 The words are, [פנה אֵיבֶךְ], “he hath turned away thine enemy.” Many copies have [אֵיבִיךְ], “thine enemies;” but it may be regarded as the poetical singular. — *Ed.*

ft54 This is a very remarkable passage. Perhaps the more literal version would be the following, —

16. *In that day he will say to Jerusalem, “Fear thou not;
Sion! relaxed let not thy hands be:*

17. *He will rejoice over thee with joy;
He will renew thee in his love,
He will exult over thee with acclamation.”*

The verb [אָמַר] is rendered as above by the Septuagint, ερεῖ, meaning the Lord. The last line but one is according to the Septuagint and the Syriac; and this sense has been adopted by *Houbigant*, *Dathius*, and *Newcome*. There is the difference only of one letter, [ך] for [כ], which are very like. The law of parallelism is in favor of this meaning. The verse contains four lines: there is an evident correspondence of meaning in the second and the last line; and so there is between the first and the third according to the preceding version, but not otherwise. The word rendered “acclamation” is a noun from the verb [רָכַה], to cry aloud, used at the beginning of verse 14. — *Ed.*

ft55 This verse presents considerable difficulties, and has been variously rendered. The Septuagint and the Targum differ as much from one another, as they do from the Hebrew. None regard the former as at all suitable; but some, as *Grotius* and *Dathius*, take the meaning of the latter, though to reconcile it with the Hebrew is difficult. *Marckius* seems to have given the most probable meaning —

*Remotos a festivitate collegi,
Ex to sunt, onus super eam opprobrium.*

*Those driven away from festivity have I gathered,
From thee they are — a burden on her is reproach.*

The word [נוג] , he derives from [הגה]. In this case it is literally, “my driven away,” or, “my removed” ones. [מועד] is assembling or meeting, as well as a fixed time or season; and the assembling was that on festal days: it may therefore be rendered, “festivals.” “From thee” is “Sion” in verse 16. Instead of “on her,” more than ten copies, as well as the Targum, have “on thee,” [עליך]; but an abrupt change of person is of frequent occurrence in the Prophets.

Following the sense of the Targum, we may, perhaps, give the following version —

*The grieved for the festivals have I gathered from thee;
They were a burden on thee, a reproach.*

The paraphrase of the Targum, as given by *Dathius*, is the following —
Those who among thee have impeded the seasons of thy festivity,
I will expel from thee; wo to them who have carried arms against
thee, and loaded thee with reproaches.

The “grieved for the festivals” were those who disliked them, who grudged the offerings that were to be made. The words are in the past tense, but future as to what is said; for the Prophets declare things as exhibited to them in a vision. — *Ed.*

^{Ft56} The first clause in this verse is amended by *Newcome* and some other in conformity with the Septuagint: but this is a very unsafe process. *Henderson’s* version is —

Behold, I will deal with all thine oppressors at that time. “Deal,” [עשה]; “interficiam — I will slay,” *Vulg.*; “conficiam — I will make an end,” *Drusius*; but to “deal with,” or “act against,” is the literal rendering. More is implied than what is expressed, which is often the case with words used in every language. — *Ed.*